



NEW DORP BRANCH

STATEN ISLAND 6, N. Y.

NEW DORP BRANCH 153 THIRD STREET STATEN ISLAND 6, N. Y.

REFERENCE

## THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT

E

S

Jan 22 '65

Any resident of the city of New York, bringing proper reference, may take out a book.

No books should be kept longer than one week, or two weeks, according to the time fixed upon by the librarian of the school, club, institution or home-library from which the book is loaned, except that upon request a book may be once renewed.

If a book is lost or injured the librarian will collect the amount represented by this loss or injury and forward the same to the office of the Extension Division.

Pictures may be borrowed through a Branch or at Room 100, Central Building. They are charged on the borrower's card for two weeks.

A fine of one cent a day is incurred for each picture not returned or renewed. A charge of five cents is made for each picture damaged.

Borrowers finding this book pencil-marked, written upon, mutilated or unwarrantably defaced, are expected to report it to the librarian. If the binding has become loosened, or if pages are torn, mutilage must not be used, but the book should be withdrawn from circulation and returned to the office.

974.72

H

~~128582~~

87-1288063

NY PUBLIC LIBRARY THE BRANCH LIBRARIES



3 3333 05122 7375

*Reference  
only  
no receipt  
at all*

NEW DORT BRANCH 155 THIRD STREET STATEN ISLAND, N.Y.

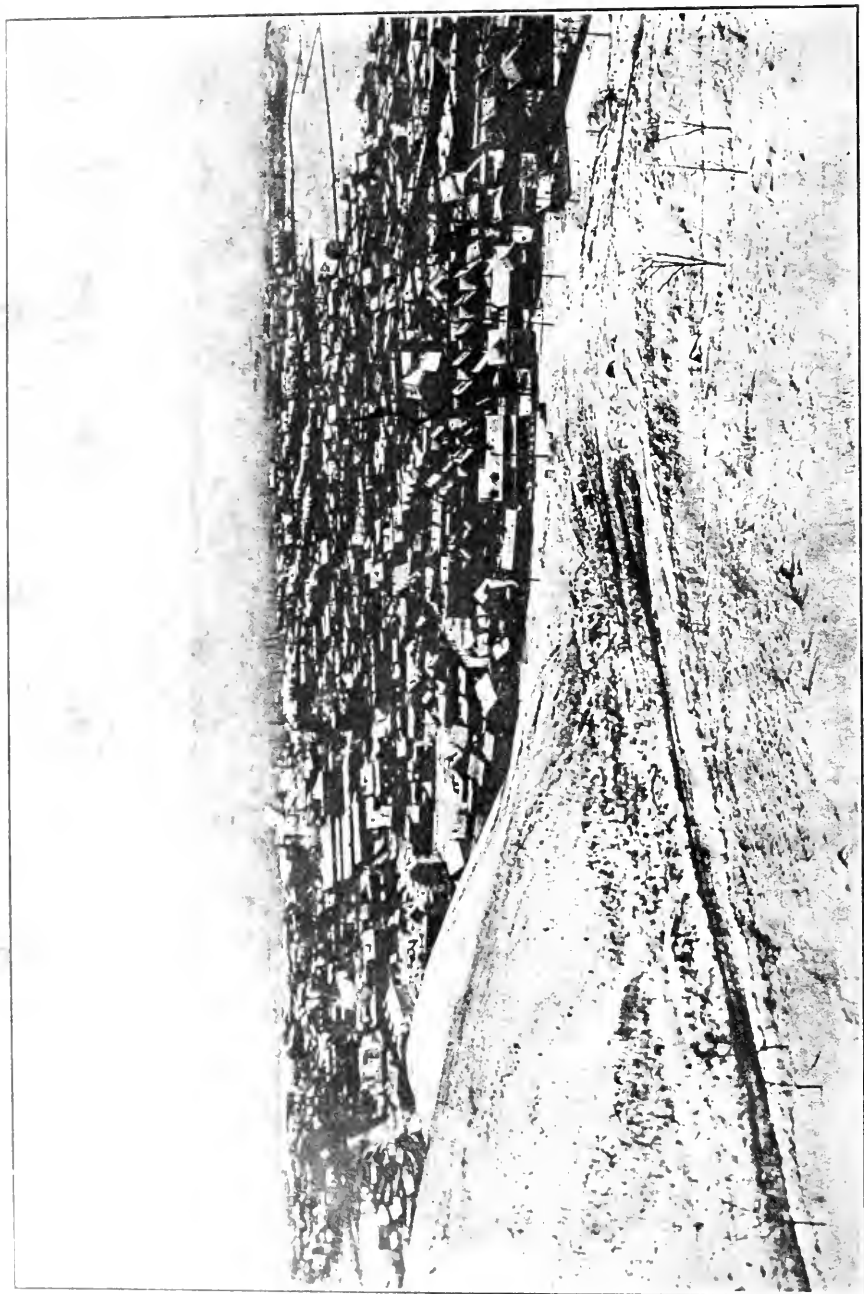
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
NEW DORT BRANCH  
155 THIRD STREET  
STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. 10306





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



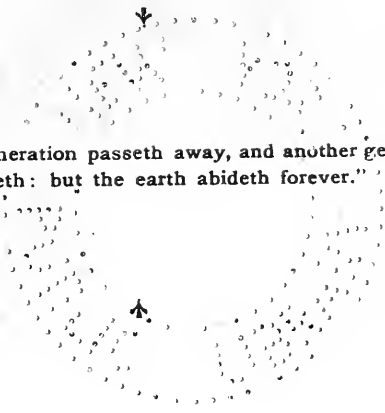


STAPLETON IN WINTER. THE HOMES OF THE VILLAGE HARMONIZE WELL WITH THE RURAL SIMPLICITY OF THE SCENE. WHEN THE DAY IS CLEAR THIS IS MERELY A FOREGROUND FOR THE BROAD PANORAMA OF SEA AND SKY, BUT UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS STAPLETON IS MONOTONOUS. THE PROPOSED SHORE IS, VERILY, SUGGESTED, ALL ELSE OBLITERATED.



# History and Legend of Howard Avenue and the Serpentine Road, Grymes Hill, Staten Island

Gathered by Charles Gilbert Hine  
From Real Estate Records and  
Long Memories

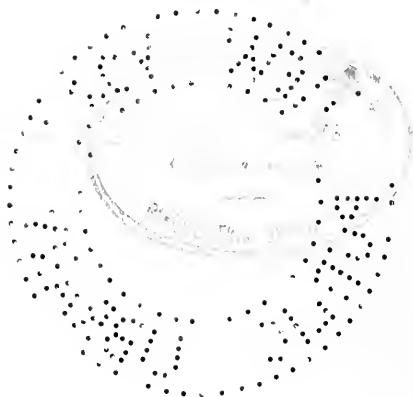


"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever."

Hine's Annual, 1914



*Privately Printed*



9202

974.72

# Prologue

"Men toil," he said, "from morn till night  
With bleeding hands and blinded sight  
For gold, more gold! They have be-  
trayed

The trust that in their souls was laid;

Their fairy birthright they have sold

For little disks of mortal gold;

And now they cannot even see

The gold upon the greenwood tree,

The wealth of colored lights that pass

In soft gradations through the grass,

# The riches of the love untold

That wakes the day from grey to gold;

And howsoe'er the moonlight weaves

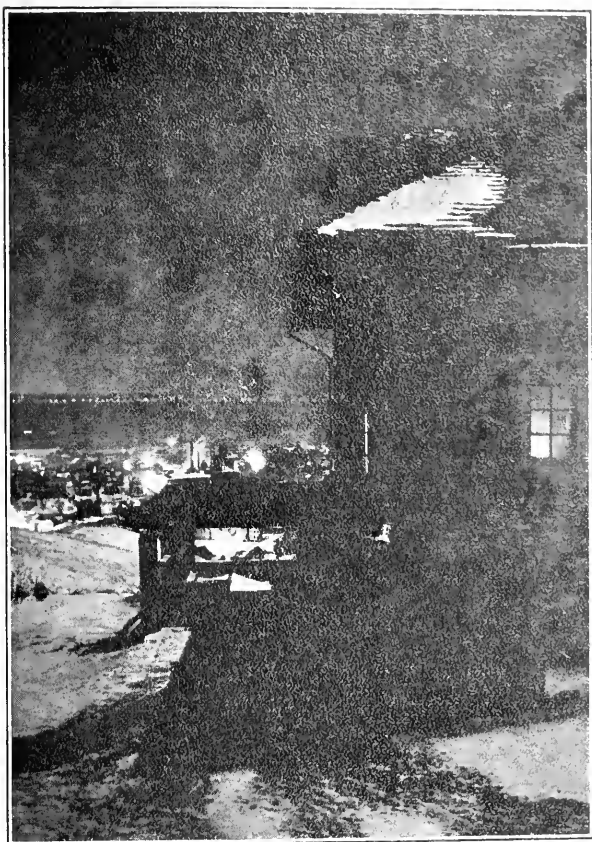
Magic webs among the leaves."

Alfred Noyes.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT  
EXTENSION DIVISION  
STATEN ISLAND OFFICE  
— CENTRAL AVENUE

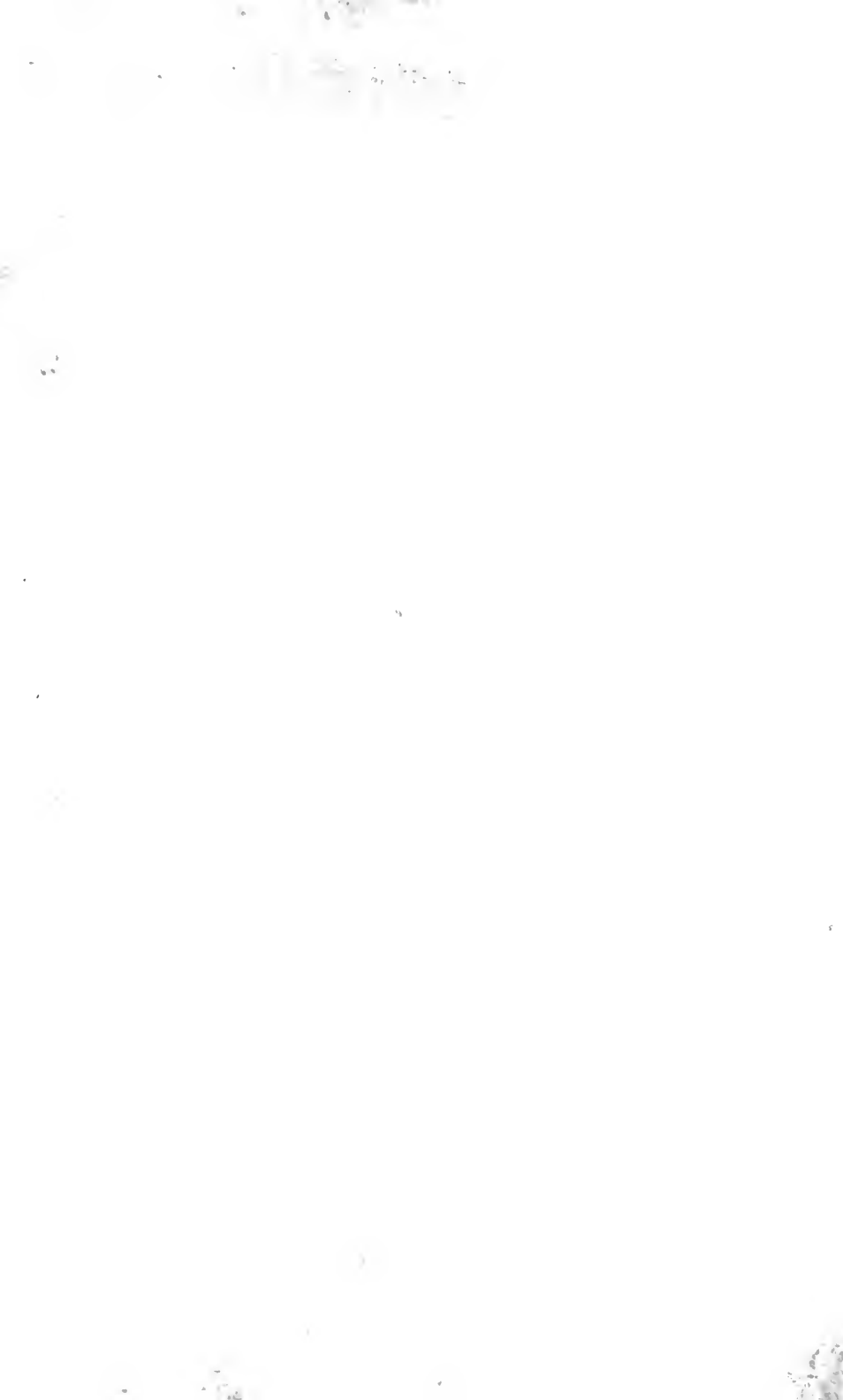
NEW DORP BRANCH 155 THIRD STREET STATEN ISLAND 6, N. Y.





STAPLETON AS IT APPEARS TO THE BENIGHTED  
TRAVELER ON GRYMES MILL.

"THE HARBOR-LANTHORNS, EACH A SPARK,  
A PIN-PRICK IN THE SOLID DARK."



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

In that which is to follow I speak not as one having authority, but rather as a scribe who records the learning of others.

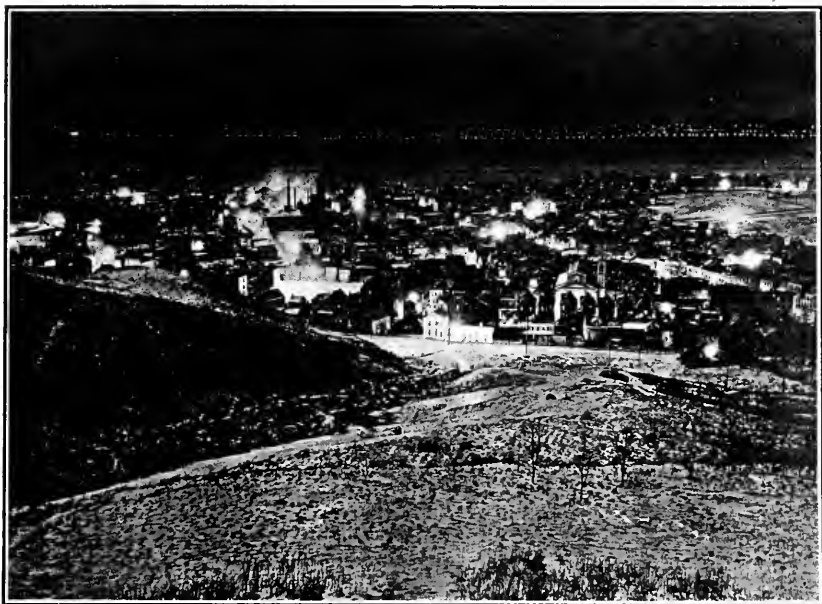
Chiefly I am indebted to Mr. Edward C. Delavan, whose knowledge of land transfers on the island is exceptionally extensive and accurate, and who has been my guide to much that has proved of interest. To Mr. William T. Davis and his "Old Names and Places." To Messrs. Alfred De Groot, Daniel Wandel, Sheriff Denyse, E. D. Clark, who lived on Howard avenue from 1843 to 1857; J. M. Betton, born in the Hunt house; Ralph M. Munroe, a frequent visitor at the Vanderbilt and Ward homes, and James Vreeland; to Mrs. James Morgan Davis, and Miss Violet Ward, who readily recalls that which came to her from her father, Gen. William G. Ward; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph D. Lawrence, Miss Elizabeth Elliott, daughter of Dr. S. M. Elliott, Miss Mary S. Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Morton, and to others in varying degrees whose memories have been my stepping-stones.

his  
C. G. ? HINE.  
mark









ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT IS SAID TO HAVE PRONOUNCED THE VIEW FROM GRYMES HILL ONE OF THE GRANDEST AND MOST IMPOSING IN THE WORLD. BELOW LIES STAPLETON AS WE SEE IT ON A WINTER NIGHT, WHILE BEYOND THE NARROWS BROOKLYN'S MILKY WAY SHINES STRONG AND CLEAR. FROM ONE POINT JUST SOUTH OF EDDY STREET EIGHT LIGHT-HOUSES AND TWO LIGHTSHIPS CAN BE SEEN ON A CLEAR NIGHT.

# SERPENTINE ROAD

1

The general history and story of the locality, including the several names that have been applied to Grymes Hill in the past and their origin. How the Serpentine Road and Howard Avenue came to be opened and when; also other matters of a similar nature.

L

LIKE Marc Antony's friend, the charms of Grymes Hill are of infinite variety. It holds something for every human temperament, some new phase for every hour of the day and in every change of the weather. The morning mist and the lazily drifting smoke from a throng of breakfast fires in the valley; the afternoon sun which picks out many a brilliant point along the far shore of the Narrows; the summer-night lights of the village beneath us; the glittering necklace of the Shore road beyond, and the more distant lights on Coney Island, with the warning flashes from eight lighthouses and two lightships—the winter moon on freshly fallen snow turning night into a dream of beautiful mystery as the eye wanders off over the lowlands into the unseeable.

These are but chapter headings for the multitudinous riches spread for all.

A traveler whose homeward flight ends on Grymes Hill once picked up a magazine and therein saw depicted our familiar view illustrating an article by Gorki, and under it

*Gorki on  
the View*

the title, "The most beautiful view in the world." A good deal, it seems to me, for a foreigner to admit, even under such extenuating circumstances.

The early history of Grymes Hill was lost before any recording angel looked into the matter, but, as the Indians touched not the high places except as hunting grounds, and the Dutch who followed were alike low-minded, it does not seem probable that this region made much history before 1830.

Those first to settle on the island preferred the low country and the water side. Messrs. Dankers and Sluyter reported in 1676 that "The eastern part (of Staten Island) is high and steep, and has few inhabitants," and so at least the Grymes Hill region continued for one hundred and fifty years.

The earliest name for the ridge, so far as known, was "Signal Hill." According to William T. Davis the British had a signal station here, and the name followed as a matter of course. Deeds of 1836 and thereabout show that the hill was known as "Castleton Heights." Madame Grymes called her place "Capo di Monte," and for a time this name was applied to the entire ridge, to be succeeded later by the present appellation. Mr. Daniel Wandel tells me that in his youth the part of the hill which looks down on "Rocky Hollow," and which was all "briars and rabbits" was known as "Snake Hill," while the southeastern end which dominates the "Richmond road" was known as "Brimstone Hill." "You could smell the brimstone—can smell it now." Old deeds give this name, according to William T. Davis. The southern slope has also been known as "Clove Hill," while

*Signal  
Hill*

*Castleton  
Heights*

*Capo di  
Monte*

*Snake Hill*

*Brimstone  
Hill*

*Clove Hill*

## SERPENTINE ROAD

3

the northern slope was at one time called "Brown's Hill" for the reason that E. G. Brown helped to erect the Lederle house on Louis street, and lived therein for some time. This region was also known as "Pole Hill," Mr. Taxter tells me, and he presumes it was because travelers over its slippery, soapstoned sides used alpenstocks or poles in their efforts to scale these craggy heights.

The known history of interest begins with the advent of Major George Howard in 1830, and of Oroondates Mauran in 1831.

At first Grymes Hill was part of the Dongan possessions, which appear to have extended as far to the eastward in these parts as the Norwood patent, which lay along the eastern foot of the hill. It so remained until some time before 1755, when a portion of its eastern slope was added to the farm of Cornelius Corson, which occupied the water front where now lies Stapleton. The deed covering this transfer was not recorded and its exact date is not known. When Cornelius dwelt with his fathers, 1789, his three sons, Daniel, Cornelius and Richard, came into possession, each receiving a strip which ran from the water to the hilltop.

The account of Howard avenue and the Serpentine road which is to follow covers such items of history and legend concerning Grymes Hill as have come from the real estate records and by word of mouth, the printed histories containing almost nothing on the subject. The word "legend" is used advisedly, as much of the material is from the lips of those with long memories—one of which at least goes back to his childhood

*Brown's Hill*

*Pole Hill*

*Early  
Owners*

*Turnpike*  
1816

school days in Rocky Hollow—1836. It is not always possible to make statements so received dovetail with that nicety which is commendable in a history, and consequently we call this the "history and legend of," etc.

Barring the Turnpike, 1816, with which we have nothing in common at the present time, the first roads on the hill would appear to have been Eddy street, Howard avenue and Prospect (now Lewis, misspelled Louis,) street.

*Oroondates*  
*Mauran*

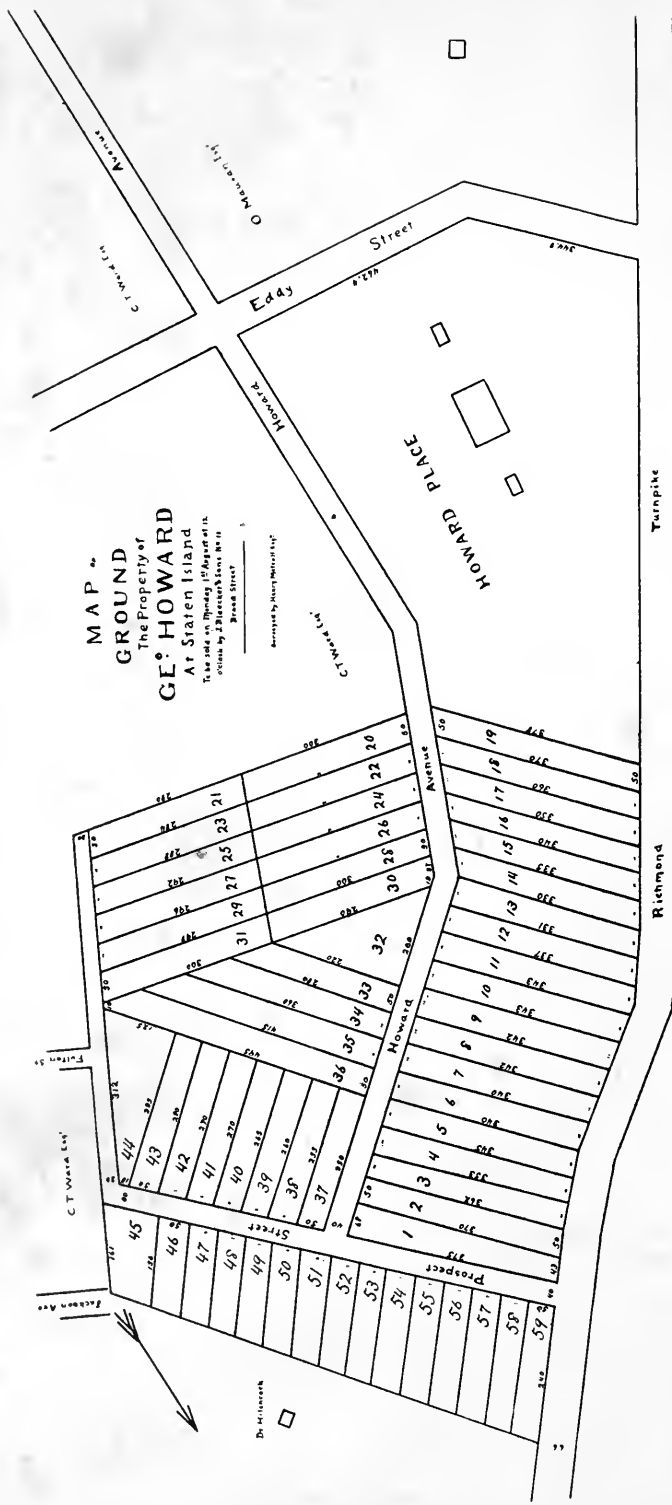
When Oroondates Mauran purchased in 1831 the property which now lies between Eddy street and the Kendall place, Howard avenue and the Turnpike, it was stipulated in the deed that land should be set off on the north and east sides of the property for roads, and thus Eddy street and that part of Howard avenue came into being. The elbow in Eddy street occurs at a point where the Corson and Vreeland farms met and may be due to this fact and some fence or other field bound on one or both of the farms.

*Howard*  
*Purchases*

Between the years 1830 and 1833 Major George Howard purchased forty-two acres, which included all land between Eddy and Louis streets, a strip along the north side of the latter and the present Hillard, Bruinier, Martin and Stirn properties, and he is probably responsible for Louis, which he named Prospect street, and the northern portion of Howard avenue. That portion of the property which is represented by the Cisco place he retained for a home, the remainder he cut up into fifty-foot lots which were sold at auction on August 1, 1836.

*Howard*  
*Avenue*





MAP OF  
THE PROPERTY OF  
GEORGE HOWARD  
AT STATEN ISLAND  
The above is a map of the property of  
George Howard, Esq. of New York  
City, as shown by the survey of  
Henry Howard of New York  
City, dated the 1st day of May, 1880.

Surveyed by Henry Howard of New York



# SERPENTINE ROAD

5

## Announcement of the auction sale of the Howard property on August 1, 1836. With names of original purchasers.

James Bleecker, Auctioneer.

By James Bleecker and Sons.

Sales Room 13 Broad St. Furness Building,

Monday, Aug. 1, (1836)

12 o'clock at their Sales Room, 13 Broad St. Staten Island.—A number of building sites, situated on the romantic heights of Staten Island, adjoining Howard Place, three-quarters of a mile from the steamboat landings at New Brighton, Tompkinsville and Bay House.

The view from these grounds is unrivaled in this or any other country; the lots are of large dimensions bounded on the one side upon an avenue, and the Richmond turnpike on the other.

The title has been strictly investigated and is undisputable.

Maps will be ready and furnished in a few days.

Terms, 10 per cent on the day of sale, 40 per cent on the delivery of the deeds, and if desired, the balance can remain on bond and mortgage.—(From the New York Commercial Advertiser of July 30, 1836.)

The sale was held probably on the date advertised as all deeds are dated on the twentieth of that month. All the lots were sold except those on the northern side of Prospect street.

Following is a list of the lots sold with names of purchasers and such items of interest as the records yield.

Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, 9, 10 and 11, Thomas Langworth, of the city of New York, Gentleman. Consideration, \$2,660.

Nos. 5 and 6, Stephen H. Herrick of the city of New York, Merchant. Consideration, \$800.

Nos. 7 and 8, 41 and 42, Joshua Moses of the city of New York, Merchant. Consideration \$1,620.

Nos. 12 and 13, 31 and 36. Benjamin Pike, of the city of New York, Optician. Consideration, \$2,045.

Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, Benjamin Wood of the town of Castleton, county of Richmond, Gentleman. Consideration, \$3,520.

No. 20, Wesley Cole, of the town of Castleton, etc. Consideration, \$400.

Nos. 21, 23, 25, 27 and 29, Thomas Hazard, of the town of Castleton, etc., Gentleman. Consideration, \$1,000.

Nos. 22, 24, 26 and 28, William Rockwell, of the town of Castleton etc., Physician. Consideration, \$2,040.

No. 30, Caleb T. Ward, of the town of Castleton, etc., Gentleman. Consideration, \$420.

Nos. 32, 33 and 34, John Y. Cebra, of the city of New York, Merchant. Consideration, \$1,420.

No. 35, George Ackerly, of the city of New York, Gentleman. Consideration, \$430.

Nos. 37, 38, 39 and 40, Wyllis Blackstone, of the city of New York. Consideration, \$1,520.

Nos. 43 and 44, Samuel R. Smith, of the town of Castleton, etc. Consideration, \$910.

Thus we see that Major Howard sold 44 lots for \$18,785, and had remaining 15 lots in addition to his home plot, which he later sold for \$22,000. For all this land, 42 acres, he paid \$8,892.50, Showing a profit of \$31,893.50, less expenses of plotting and sale.

Major Howard came in 1830. The deed to Madame Grymes's property, 1836, begins "all that certain tract, etc., lying on the west side of Howard avenue," etc. Thus Howard avenue was then an established fact.

The Serpentine road was a later development. Madame Grymes had her private entrance from the Richmond road; this was also the case with the Nesmith and Cunard properties, while Captain Vanderbilt had an entrance on the Clove road.

The fact that it is a "road," and not an "avenue," is the best of evidence that the Serpentine grew as required, and was not laid out deliberately by any real estate boomer. Between the years 1836 and 1865 the Nesmith family purchased a large tract through which the Serpentine road now runs fronting on the Richmond road, the Clove road and the Turnpike. These purchases were made from twenty-four separate property-owners, and necessitated the recording of about fifty deeds. In not one of these instruments is the Serpentine road

*Serpentine  
Road*

## SERPENTINE ROAD

7

mentioned as a boundary line or in any way; hence it would seem improbable that the road was a recognized highway during this period. The map of 1845 shows no such road. In the agreement of 1867, concerning Hillside avenue, noted elsewhere, the Serpentine road is mentioned by name.

As Miss Violet Ward recalls it, the southern end of our beautiful roadway began in a Nesmith cow trail from the grazing grounds along the Clove road to the stables on the top of the hill, which stood opposite the present El Paradiso. This was so narrow that a carriage attempting it would be scratched by the briars on either hand. When General William G. Ward purchased—1865—he found that he had no access to any highway, and so he adopted the Nesmith cowpath by setting his fence back. At first Cunard at one end and Jacob Vanderbilt at the other fenced him off, as neither was willing to contribute land for a public road, preferring that the village should be compelled to do the work. This trouble was finally straightened out, however, and gradually the road grew as necessity required, allowing the lay of the land to govern its course until it came to what we now know as the Drucklieb place, when it passed down the hillside west of Mr. Drucklieb's dwelling and, Mr. Drucklieb tells me, came out on the Richmond road at or near Broad street.

Miss Ward makes this statement, knowing that the Serpentine road is laid out on a map published in 1850, but she is quite sure that the mapmaker simply accepted the Nesmith cowpath, which was in those days so rough that no vehicle ever attempted it a second time if, by any chance, it could go the long way round. However, Mr. Munroe

*Where  
Howard Av.  
and Serpen-  
tine Road  
Meet*

*Hillside  
Avenue*

*Howard  
Avenue*

writes "I dislike to take exception to the statements of my friend, Miss Ward, regarding the Serpentine road, but my family left the Emerson Hill place about 1862 or 1863 and I feel quite certain that between 1857 and 1861 we drove over that road many times to show visitors the wonderful view."

Howard avenue ran into the Serpentine road at that obtuse angle in the Kendall stone wall which conceals the future, no matter which way one travels. Before the Serpentine became established as a public way, however, that part which ran through the Grymes (present Drucklieb) property was closed and the Serpentine road and Howard avenue became one.

By an agreement made in 1867 between John P. Nesmith, George Browne, Edward Cunard and Eugene Dutilh, owners of the surrounding property, the private carriage road established some time previous to 1843, and known as Nesmith street, was closed and Hillside avenue, which included a small part of the older road, was opened for the mutual accommodation of the adjoining land-owners.

It is proposed to begin our story at the northern end of Howard avenue and worry south over that and the Serpentine road, giving the history as we go—geographically, rather than chronologically.

As first laid out, Howard avenue was merely a private lane, gates being placed at Louis and Eddy streets, which were closed at night and opened in the morning. Why any one should desire to call a country road an "avenue" is one of those mysteries that only an alderman or a real estate promoter

can solve. Therefore, do not build up in your imagination a Howard avenue lined with palatial mansions set shoulder to shoulder, or gorgeous shops, but rather a winding country road bordered by the homes of those who would dwell apart from the hurry and noise of the city. And join with me in the hope that there is some particularly warm spot tucked away in the hereafter for the author of such a desecration as "Avenue" in such a region as this.

From Daniel Wandel comes the following story of what may have been the first steam railway on Staten Island. I have been unable to verify this from any other source, but Mr. Wandel's memory appears to be clear in regard to even minute details, and he has told me the same story on two occasions without material variations.

About 1842 or 1843 some resident of Grymes Hill conceived the idea of putting a cog road up its slope. The track was laid from Beach street, which was open at that time, about where it runs into St. Paul's avenue; this track ran "slantindicularly" up the hillside, crossing the present Stirn and Davis properties and coming out on Howard avenue at or near Eddy street; thence following the line of the present highway to the southern end of the hill. The rails consisted of flat strips of iron with cogs riveted thereon for the steep part of the climb, and were laid on four-foot cord wood sticks. The engine and rails were made in the blacksmith shop of Peter S. Wandel, which then stood near the shore just south of the old Nautilus Hall, Tompkinsville. The engine was small and crude and, according to Mr. Wandel, passengers straddled it. The chief use for which the road

*A Legend*

was intended was to carry those dwelling at the southern end of the hill to a point from which they could easily walk to the ferry.

It was, however, but a nine days' wonder, for while the engine climbed the slope well enough, the brakes were inadequate for the descent, and it returned to the lower regions with a suddenness that discommoded its promoters to the point of standing them on their heads, and was promptly consigned to that bourne from which no engine returns—the scrap heap.

There is at least one irreconcilable among Mr. Wandel's statements which refuses to adjust itself. He thinks that the railroad was originated and built by a son of General Ward, and that its southern end stopped at the Ward front door. General Ward did not purchase his property until 1865, and the General was only about ten years old when this is said to have happened. However, Mr. Wandel is sure he was a small boy at the time, and that he remembers, as such, exploring the track as a healthy boy naturally would.

Gordon Winslow did not purchase until 1846, Jacob H. Vanderbilt in 1847, Sir Edward Cunard in 1850. The map of 1845, given elsewhere, shows no road beyond the Nesmith place. Hence it would seem that the settlement was too sparse in 1842 to warrant such a venture.

When the Stapleton flats were filled in with excavated material from Prospect Hill (east of the German Club Rooms) a tram road is said to have been laid by the contractors, it is of course possible that this is what Mr. Wandel had in mind. Miss Ward tells me that after her father built—1865—he and others, believing they had discovered

*Prospect  
Hill*

# SERPENTINE ROAD

11

valuable minerals at this end of the hill, put through a small track to the Richmond road at or near Broad street, but this was merely to carry ore to the lower level and, so far as is known, no engine was included in the outfit. As the mining did not pay, the track was used but a short time, and those who fathered the scheme were so pestered by facetious references to their fairy gold that they refrained from conversing on the subject, and it was soon forgotten.

In the open field and woods across the road from and opposite El Paradiso the fortune-hunters sunk a number of small shafts in their search for minerals. At the edge of the road and just within the property now fenced off for the water tower a considerable pit was dugged, but all were filled in later as they became more or less successful traps for the unwary.

Grymes Hill is known to geologists as an elevated dome of serpentine. The serpentine or soapstone area extends from New Brighton to Richmond, and includes the hill country of the island. In places where glacial erosion was limited the rock is weathered into a soft, yellowish, fractured condition to which the name "soapstone" is applied, but where the weathered stone was eroded the rock is hard and dense in texture and dark green in color.

The following notes on the hill country of Staten Island are furnished by William T. Davis and, while covering more territory than is included in this book, are given in order to preserve the information:—

"On the old map of Staten Island, made in the year 1793, probably by Bernard Sprong and Richard Conner, who received £13,8,0 for their labors, 'A Ridge of Moun-

*Mining on  
Grymes Hill*

*Geology of  
Grymes Hill*

*Hill Country  
of Staten  
Island*

*Archean  
Serpentine*

tains' is shown. It extends from what is now called St. George to Fresh Kill Creek, that is, to a little beyond the village of Richmond, a distance in all of nearly seven miles.

"To the early settlers this ridge of mountains was full of mystery. It was heavily wooded and there was a labyrinth of lesser hills and valleys covering part of the area, where it was easy to lose one's way. We now know that these lesser hills are part of the terminal moraine of the great glacier. The main backbone of the ridge, however, is Archean Serpentine, one of the oldest formations of the earth, and into this soft rock the early settlers dug holes in their search for precious metals that were supposed to be present in considerable abundance. In the patent to John Palmer in 1687, which covered the land along the ridge of mountains and much more, we read that he was to have all the ' . . . marshes, woods, underwoods, trees, timber, quarries, rivers, brooks, ponds, lakes, streams, creeks, harbors, beaches, ffishing, hawking and ffowling, mines, minerals (silver and gold mines only excepted), mills, mill dams,' etc. This land was later conveyed by Palmer and his wife to Thomas Dongan.

"A critical examination of the range of hills will show that its eastern declivity is generally much more precipitous than the western slope, and in this feature resembles the Orange Mountains, the Kittatinny Mountains and other parallel ridges to the westward of Staten Island. Fort Hill, near St. George; Mount Tompkins or Pavilion Hill; Ward's Hill; Signal Hill; Capo di Monte or Grymes Hill; Brimstone Hill;







GRYMES HILL IN 1845.

# SERPENTINE ROAD

13

Todt Hill; Iron Hill or the Yserberg; Ocean Hill or Ocean Terrace; Richmond or Latourette's Hill; and Ketchum's or Cemetery Hill are names for some of the individual prominences of the 'Range of Mountains' of the old-time map of 1793."

## GRYMES HILL IN 1845.

From a "Map of New Brighton, Tompkinsville, Stapleton and Clifton. Surveyed and Drawn by C. H. Blood, 1845".

The original is the property of William T. Davis and is the only one in existence so far as he knows.

This is a literal copy even to the extent of following misspelled names.

Dotted lines on the original map indicate that the road from the Nesmith houses to Howard avenue was a private way, as was the road through the lower Grymes property to the Richmond road.

Duncan avenue looks as though it was originally a Mauran stable entrance.

Note thrt:

Louis street was a mere connecting link.

Anthon is Anthem.

Mauran is Maran.

Grymes is Grimes.

Silver Lake was Fresh Pond. (On a map of 1850 it is 'Fresh Pond or Silver Lake.")

The north and south line that divides the Mauran property if carried north to the Turnpike would be continued by the boulder line mentioned elsewhere as a division line of the Vreeland farm.

The English name of the J. P. Nesmith place, "Inwood", is as a one word translation of the Indian name, "Monocnong," adopted by Mr. Mauran.

The Serpentine road was not in existence except that portion which shows as a private drive from the Nesmith houses to Howard avenue.



## PROLOGUE

By

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

"One Sunday I went with him a few miles into the country. It was a soft, bright day; the fields and hills lay turned to the sky, as if every leaf and blade of grass were nerves bared to the touch of the sun. I almost felt the ground warm under my feet. The meadows waved and glittered, the lights and shadows were exquisite, and the distant hills seemed only to remove the horizon farther away. As we strolled along, picking wild-flowers, for it was in summer, I was thinking what a fine day it was for a trip to Spain, when Titbottom suddenly exclaimed:—

"'Thank God! I own this landscape!'

"'You,' returned I.

"'Certainly,' returned he.

"'Why,' I answered, 'I thought this was part of Bourne's property?'

"Titbottom smiled.

"'Does Bourne own the sun and sky? Does Bourne own that sailing shadow yonder? Does Bourne own the golden luster of the grain, or the motion of the wood, or those ghosts of hills that glide pallid along the horizon? Bourne owns the dirt and fences; I own the beauty that makes the landscape.'"

—From "Prue and I."

Fingerboard for off-islanders who would know Grymes Hill—Ferry from Battery to St. George. Silver Lake trolley to Louis street, tandem, one foot before the other, to Howard Avenue.

#### HOWARD AVENUE—THE SERPENTINE ROAD.



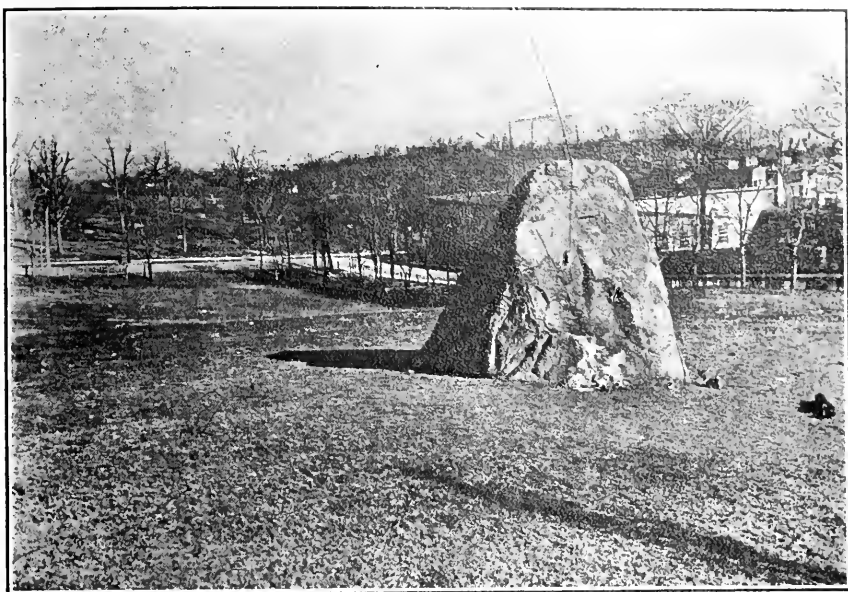
HIS way of ours reminds me of a corkscrew—Louis street the handle, Howard avenue the shank and the devious meanderings of the Serpentine road the business end of the instrument. We shall investigate each in its turn.

Louis street should be Lewis street, so it is said. But there is a small-sized mystery that I have been unable to fathom as to what Lewis it was intended to honor. As late as 1874 the street was known as Prospect (see Beers's atlas of that date), a deed of 1882 spells the name "Louis" while several deeds of 1874, a deed of 1876 and one of 1886 refer to it as "Lewis"; the present telephone directory also carries the latter spelling.

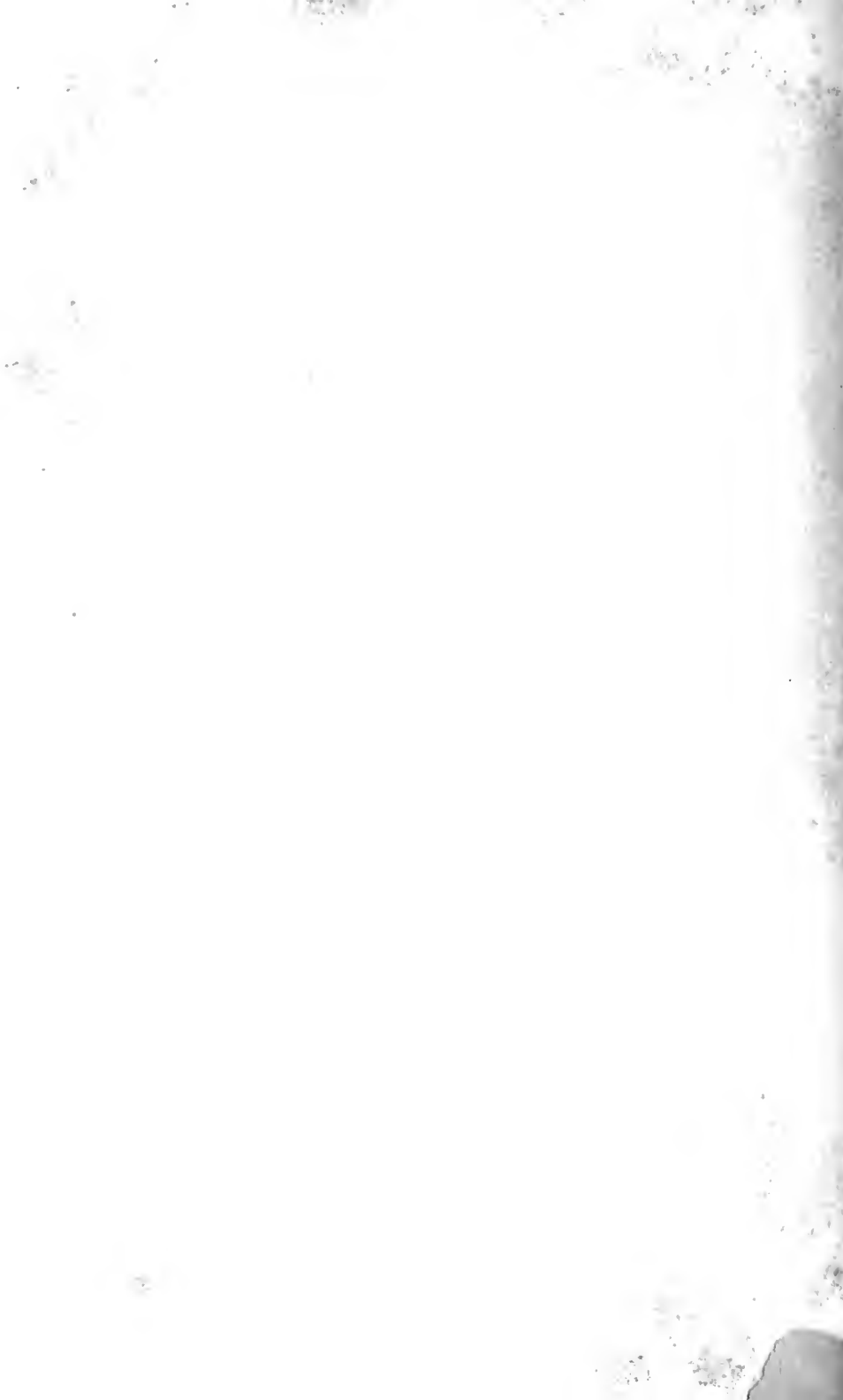
Miss Lederle tells me that it was so entitled because a Dr. Lewis lived in the house now known as the Lederle homestead about the time her father purchased in 1878. But no doctor of the name is on record as having owned the property, none of the local histories note such a name and I do not find any one else who knew of such a doctor. Mr. J. D. Lawrence has been told that the

*Lewis  
Street*

*Prospect  
Street*



THE SUGAR LOAF OR DRUID'S ROCK, SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LEWIS STREET AND HOWARD AVENUE. THIS ROCK IS SAID TO HAVE FORMERLY BEEN A GATHERING PLACE FOR THE INDIANS, WHO WERE IN THE HABIT OF CAMPING HERE WHEN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.





## SERPENTINE ROAD

17

street was named for Father Lewis, a well known priest and a very popular man; no one else has been found who can verify this, but several of the old-timers think it quite possible.

Our all-wise city fathers probably jumped at the conclusion that the street was named for Louis De Jonge, or possibly some equally astute sign painter may have been allowed to exercise his own good judgment in the matter of spelling street signs.

Louis street, formerly Prospect street, and Howard avenue, may have been laid out by Major George Howard in 1836 to open property which he introduced to the public. A map of 1845 indicates that only that part from the Turnpike to Howard avenue was then in use. Louis street commences on the right with Sugar Loaf field and on the left with the DeJonge paper factory.

In 1852-3 Julius De Jonge "merchant of the city of New York" purchased the fifteen lots along the north side of Prospect street numbered from 45 to 59, Howard map. The property was then transferred to Louis De Jonge who erected a small factory at the Turnpike corner which has since grown to the present proportions.

Beyond the paper factory and on the left as we go stands the De Jonge homestead, erected when the business was much more modest than at present. This was purchased in 1872 by Dr. John E. Lauer, a chemist. In 1886 it was the property of Constance Mullmann though I do not seem to have discovered just when the transfer was made. The lady is commonly referred to as the "countess"; she was an educated woman said to have come from abroad. Lo-

*Julius  
De Jonge*

*De Jonge  
Homestead*

*Dr. John  
E. Lauer*

*Constance  
Mullmann*

cal stories agree that she, being a devout Catholic, gave this place and in fact all she had to the church expecting that a convent would be erected here of which she would be the mother superior, but finding that for some reason, possibly because she was a married woman, she was not eligible, she objected so strenuously to the situation that in order to quiet her a portion of the property was returned and she left the neighborhood.

The next house, still on the left is that of J. F. Fredericks erected in 1886 on a portion of the Lederle property, Mr. Fredericks having married a daughter of the house of Lederle.

Next east stands the Lederle homestead, now occupied by T. William Stake. The place was purchased in 1878 by Joseph Lederle and has remained in the family ever since.

In 1870 Louis De Jonge sold the eastern end of his property, some 309 feet along Prospect street, to E. G. Brown and Dr. Kenneth Reid, consideration \$6,000. In 1876 these sold to Elizabeth S. Beemer for \$20,000 and in 1877 she to Eliza Livingston and the following year she to Clara J. Lederle.

Edward Graham Brown is recalled by some of the older neighbors as poor, but proud, a lawyer by profession and a gentleman by practice. He evidently made an impression on the locality as this part of the hill was known for a time as "Brown's Hill", but more than this I have been unable to discover. Probably he lived in one side of the house and Dr. Reid in the other, as Miss Lederle tells me that when her father purchased it was a double dwelling.

None appear to remember Dr. Reid, while

*J. F.  
Fredericks*

*T. W. Stake*

*E. G. Brown  
Dr. Kenneth  
Reid*

*Clara  
J. Lederle*

*Brown's  
Hill*

## SERPENTINE ROAD

19

the brief ownership of Mrs. Beemer and Mrs. Livingston possibly signify that they did not occupy the premises.

Beyond Howard avenue, and on the right as we travel, are two houses, the exact date of which is uncertain, the Bruinier and the Hillard homes. (In mentioning places, the first name in each instance will be that of the present owner.)

The Harry Roberts Hillard house, whose commanding position includes so much of the view that a stranger might easily become lost therein, crowns the highest part of the ridge here. From an abstract of title we learn that this is part of a large tract of land which in 1718 was owned by Ellis Duxbury and which by will he devised to the rector of St. Andrew's Church, it being thereafter known as the "Glebe," in fact one of the Glebe boundary lines cuts almost precisely through the centre of the Hillard house. In 1814 the Legislature authorized the church to sell the tract, whereupon Daniel D. Tompkins added the greater part thereof to his earthly possessions.

From Tompkins it passed to Caleb T. Ward and thence, about 1833, to Major George Howard, who in 1836 plotted this and the surrounding territory in fifty foot lots, and invited the public to buy. This section extended east from Howard avenue three hundred and sixty-eight feet; beginning at the avenue, four lots were sold to Willis Blackstone (present Bruinier), the next two lots to Joshua Moses, and the remaining frontage of sixty-eight feet to Samuel R. Smith (present Hillard). These were probably speculative purchases as none of the purchasers built. Between the years 1846 and 1851 Charles Keutgen ac-

*Harry R.  
Hillard  
House*

*Glebe Bound-  
ary Line*

*Willis Black-  
stone, Joshua  
Moses*

*Sam'l R.  
Smith*

*Chas. Keut-  
gen*

quired all of this property, and it is probable that he built both houses as maps of 1845 and 1850 which are believed correct do not show any houses here. Mrs. Emma Schering, daughter of Charles Keutgen, was born in the Hillard house and is certain that her father erected both it and the Bruinier home.

The later transfers of the Hillard place are as follows:—

In 1870-2 Keutgen to Anton M. Mosle.

1887 Mosle to James C. McAndrew.

1894 McAndrew to William Rockstroh.

1900 Rockstroh to Harry R. Hillard.

*Sam'l R.  
Smith*

The Samuel R. Smith, who purchased these lots from Howard in 1836, was the well-known physician, after whom the Smith Infirmary is named. Although he died in 1851, stories illustrating his goodness and large heartedness are still current. I have an incident from Mr. De Groot which does not appear in any of the histories:—

“One very dark night, the doctor was driving along a lonely road when a man sprang for the horse's head and demanded his money with the usual formula. The doctor recognized the voice as that of the wayward son of a good family, and addressed him by name promising that if he would turn over a new leaf and keep it turned he, the doctor, would never say anything about the matter.”

Miss Benham relates a story which she, when a young girl, heard from the doctor's own lips: “One night on a lonely road, the doctor was held up by a highwayman, who was so savage that the traveler feared for his life, but he expostulated with the man, told him who he was, stating that he had no doubt attended some member of the

ruffian's own family in the past, whereupon the fellow walked off without offering further violence." The doctor was noted for his philanthropy and attentions to the sick poor, for which he seldom received remuneration.

The doctor had ideas of his own concerning the care of his horses, which of necessity were driven very hard at times. His method of feeding was to dump a bag of oats in the manger and allow the horse to eat as much and as often as he wished, and no matter how hot the animal might be he was permitted to drink his fill under any and all circumstances. Daniel Wandel, who tells me this, says that the doctor never foundered a horse. Trips were long and the going sometimes very heavy; it was the doctor's habit to stop along the way at times and hire a horse, leaving his own tired animal to recuperate.

The house was at one time occupied by a well known champion of the manly art, "Billy" Clarke, a boxer of note. Mr. Lawrence when a young man frequented the place in company with Dr. S. R. Elliott, who, he states, was the only man who could stand up in front of the professional.

The Ansco G. Bruinier home stands at the corner of Louis street and Howard avenue. As told in the note on the Hillard property George Howard sold this corner in 1836 to Willis Blackstone, and he in 1851 to Charles Keutgen. In 1862 the house was leased to John S. Tuttle and John W. Stout, Jr. When Keutgen sold and to whom, is not clear, but probably to Bishop John Freeman Young. The next owner was Frederick B. Wendt, who in August, 1903, sold to Olga Josephine Jones, pre-

*Billy Clarke*

*Dr. S. R.  
Elliott*

*Ansco G.  
Bruinier*

*Bishop John  
F. Young*

*F. B.  
Wendt*

*Willis  
Blackstone*

*John F.  
Young*

sumably because the lady held a mortgage; she in April, 1904, to The Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, St. Joseph's Seminary. In February, 1907, The Sisters, etc. sold to Ansco G. Bruinier.

The New York directories from 1836 on show a Willis Blackstone, builder, who at no time resided outside of the city, he may have used this as a summer home, or may have purchased the property as a speculation.

John Freeman Young was at one time assistant minister at Trinity Church, New York, he was later appointed Bishop of Florida, July 25, 1867, and spent his winters in that state and his summers on Grymes Hill; his style of living gives the impression that he was not wholly dependent on the income from the bishopric over which he presided.

Frederick B. Wendt enlarged the house and added the upper story.

### HOWARD AVENUE.

It is doubtful whether one could find within one hundred miles of Manhattan another so beautiful, rural roadway as this. In itself, exclusive of the view, it is a remarkable combination of those features that are commonly called "picturesque." Most of the houses have been here long enough to fit themselves into the landscape and the whole way has acquired that indefinable something which comes with the long association of man and nature where both work in harmony. The gray stone walls which give a suggestion of the exclusive, by no means deprive the passer-by of the beauties within, yet lend the same enchantment that is found in a bend in the

road, mystery. We are all of us endowed with more or less curiosity and anything that piques that curiosity adds materially to the pleasure of the moment, whether it is a stone wall bordering beautiful grounds or a veil covering a beautiful face.

Our way lies chiefly along the eastern side of the Hill, just below its brow, and consequently it is only now and then that we of the roadside catch a glimpse of the blue hills of New Jersey, our land of the setting sun. At its very beginning Howard avenue gives somewhat of this, but it is only those who dwell on the summit of the ridge that have the full sweep of the western horizon. This, however, is of small moment, comparatively. There are many spots from which blue hills and fair, sunlit skies may be seen, but only one that looks down on so much of human interest and natural beauty as does this highway whose praises we are to sing.

As we leave Louis street we have on the right (west) the Sugar Loaf field, so-called from the large glacial boulder which raises its head high above the surrounding field flowers. This has been in the Irving family for many years, they purchasing from John A. Cisco. Mr. Cisco found it a bit of the Quarantine woods, but desiring a pasture for his cattle cut off the trees that the grass might grow. Mr. W. T. Davis recalls that the finding of this boulder in the woods was one of the things for small boys to do when he was in that class.

Daniel Wandel states that he can remember as a boy, 1836, seeing Indians camped about this rock. These were no doubt Indians from New Jersey who, once in so often, came to the island for basket wood.

*Sugar  
Loaf Rock*

*John A.  
Cisco*

*Basket  
Wood*

In the last Indian deed of the island, 1670, Bayle's history states that: "They reserved two sorts of wood, however, and within the memory of the people now living, small parties of Indians at long intervals have visited the island, and exercised their reserved right of cutting such wood as they required for the purpose of making baskets." Basket wood was either ash or elder. The log was laid on the ground at the feet of a squaw, in whose hands was placed a club, the buck sitting on a near-by stump smoking the pipe of peace while he bossed the job; it was the squaw's part to pound the log from end to end and on all sides. (These were the good old days when women had an abundance of "rights".)

At the proper time the buck would cease from the difficult art of directing, and with a sharp knife cut through the year's growth which the pounding had loosened, when the thin layer of wood was easily peeled off. This could be repeated until the log was reduced to a small pole. The thin sheets thus made were split to a required width and woven into baskets, which the women were freely allowed to sell.

*John Martin  
place*

*Dr. S. M.  
Elliott*

John Martin place. The original house here, which has been added to several times, was erected by Dr. S. M. Elliott as a speculation. He secured a bargain lot of flagstones in New York and standing these on edge bolted them to the timbers thus illustrating in an odd way that he was not as other men. His daughter believes that the first tenant was Henry Sedley.

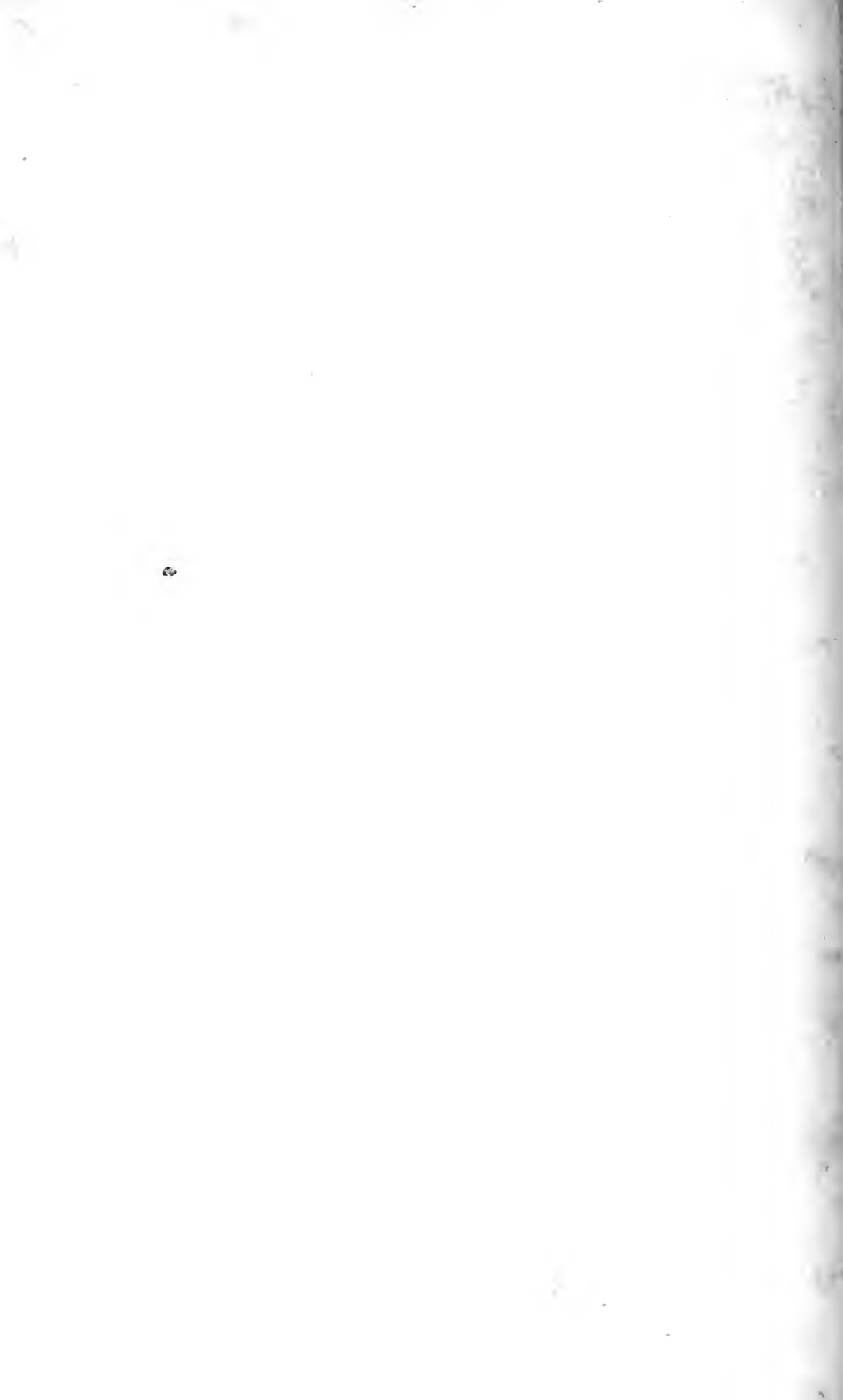
*Henry  
Sedley*

This property consists of lots 32, 33 and 34, Howard map; at the auction sale in August, 1836, these were purchased by John Y. Cebra. He paid \$1,420, and after holding





THE GROUP OF HOUSES ON THE NORTHERN END OF HOWARD AVENUE AND ON LEWIS STREET AS SEEN FROM THE DAVIS PLACE. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT THOSE SHOWING AGAINST THE SKY LINE ARE THE HOMES OF C. ALLAN BLYTHE, LOUIS A. STIRN, JOHN MARTIN, ANSCO G. BRUINIER AND HARRY R. HILLARD. PICTURE TAKEN IN FEBRUARY, 1914.



## SERPENTINE ROAD

25

for sixteen years sold in September, 1852, to Dr. Elliott for \$2,000, the price paid being an indication that no building had been erected. In January, 1870, the Doctor sold to Anne Norton, wife of Henry Sedley, for \$8,000, and on March 11, 1912, Barbara, daughter of Henry Sedley, sold to Prestonia Mann Martin.

The common impression is that Mrs. Sinclair owned this property and that Henry Sedley resided with her but the real estate records do not bear this out. The lady held a mortgage on the property and may have advanced money for its purchase but title was taken in the name of Mr. Sedley.

Mrs. Sinclair was the former wife of Edwin Forrest. She sued for divorce in 1851 and won her case through a "stupendous blunder" of the lawyer representing the defendant. The case was so celebrated that it has been published among "Extraordinary Cases".

Mrs. Sinclair was an actress of note and I am told was also literary. She was generally known as good to the poor, kind and hospitable. Miss Thompson tells me that during the draft riots of civil war time Mrs. Sinclair harbored in the kitchen of this house numbers of negroes, thus saving them from attack. As she was not known as an abolitionist the mob made no effort to search the house and she was able to offer the protection in comparative safety to herself.

Efforts to secure facts concerning Henry Sedley have met with little success. Such of his family as I have been able to communicate with practically refuse to be interviewed and about all that can be said is that he was a newspaper man of some

*Mrs. Sinclair*

*Negros  
Sheltered  
From Mob*

*Henry  
Sedley*

*Charles  
Dickens*

*Gorki*

*Ernest F.  
Slocum*

*Dr. S. M.  
Elliott*

note and an expert at the game of chess. I am told that he was born a Smith, Jones, Brown or Robinson, but having aspirations for a handle less plebeian fixed on Sedley as altogether lovely.

It is claimed that Charles Dickens was a guest here at one time and the room he is said to have occupied is still pointed out.

One of the notables entertained at this house in recent times was Gorki, who came to this country in 1906 to aid the revolutionary movement in Russia. His mission was a failure so far as collecting money was concerned and he spent a large part of his time writing for the good of the cause and as his literary efforts commanded high prices he secured considerable money all of which, except enough for his bare living expenses was given to the revolutionists.

He was a guest of the Martins for five weeks, but never went about the roads much as he feared the spies which he claimed the Russian Government had constantly watching him. No one was seen in the locality who could be identified as a spy, but it was believed such were about as there was evidence at other points that he was being watched.

Gorki spoke no English and communicated through his wife who spoke French fluently. She was of the nobility of Russia, but had joined the Revolutionary party and was an exile.

The property of Ernest F. Slocum, "Tower House," on the west, consists of lots 10 and 11 and fractions of 9 and 12, Howard map. Dr. S. M. Elliott erected the building as a dwelling, this being his only home on the hill; he sold to John J. Cisco in

## SERPENTINE ROAD

27

August, 1873; the Cisco estate to Marie, wife of Ludwig Raecke, she to A. D. Irving in May, 1886, and he to Mr. Slocum in February, 1906.

It is the "Tower House" because Doctor Elliott used the tower as an observatory, it being capped with a dome from which a telescope sent inquiring glances heavenward, for it appears that the doctor was something of an astronomer.

Some time later the building was used as a boys' school. In the early seventies a mixture compounded of equal parts of small boy and firecracker set the tower on fire one glorious Fourth of July, and its present style of roof is thus accounted for.

We will introduce Doctor Samuel McKenzie Elliott as he introduced himself to Staten Island.

About 1835-6 Dr. Elliott visited the island for the first time and in order to do so engaged the services of a Battery boatman who charged one dollar to row the five miles which separates Manhattan from Staten Island.

The beauties of the island completely captivated the Scotchman who had a strong leaning toward the beautiful in nature and he immediately purchased property at what is now Bard avenue and Richmond Terrace and erected several houses, being later attracted to the Grymes Hill neighborhood.

It was the Doctor's artistic sense which led him to make his home on Staten Island rather than on Manhattan Island. He was fond of predicting that here would be the city rather than the older site and called it "Bay City", but so far Manhattan appears to have kept in the lead.

While his love of the beautiful so far ob-

*Tower  
House*

*Dr. S. M.  
Elliott*

*Bay City*

scured the practical side that he sometimes overlooked such trifles as stairs in his buildings and omitted curtains for the windows it led him to select charming sites for homes. The "Tower House", which answered well enough for his family, was his first building on the hill. It was so small that when he removed therefrom and tried to rent he found it necessary to make a number of additions, but he had notions of his own as a general thing and if they did not fit in with the popular taste he never allowed such a small detail to worry him.

The doctor married a "blue-eyed Irish girl", Letitia Irvine, his immigration to this country from his native Scotland being partly due, it is said, to the fact that she had preceded him here. He came in 1833 when twenty-two years of age and in 1835 settled in New York as an oculist.

He was a pioneer in his line and like many another pioneer was not understood and suffered from much abuse at the hands of the medical profession. He was accused of being a quack and of other unpleasant things and of using unknown drugs. But his frankness in throwing his office open for inspection, his wonderful personal magnetism and enthusiasm combined with remarkable skill and scientific attainments, finally compelled recognition.

He was the first medical practitioner in this country to make a specialty of the treatment of the eyes, but he never neglected to build up and strengthen the body as an aid, and many stories are told of the tricks he played on patients to this end. In Boston he pretended to have discovered great virtue in the waters of a well near a blacksmith shop on the far side of the Charles river, and

*The first  
Oculist*

which could only be reached by a footbridge. As the water must be drunk immediately on being drawn the patient must walk for it and thus the end was gained. Mrs. George William Curtis has heard Dr. S. R. Elliott say that when his father operated on the eye of a patient the latter lay on the floor and the doctor held his head between his, the doctor's, knees during the operation.

Among his patients were John Jacob Astor, Commodore Vanderbilt, Peter Cooper, Prescott, the historian, Longfellow, Gottschalk, Horace Greeley, James Russell Lowell, and many other notables. His family tell an incident concerning the first named. Astor, being much concerned over his physical condition, agreed to pay the doctor \$50 per day to keep him alive, but was so stingy that he would not follow directions. At one time the doctor ordered that he be kept thoroughly warm and for this purpose insisted on a wood fire which was built in his presence. He left shortly after but having forgotten his gloves came back to find Astor extinguishing the blaze.

When the civil war came he, with the assistance of his three sons, Samuel R., Alvin Vaughn and William St. George and with his daughter, Elizabeth, acting as "enrolling officer"—raised at his own expense—some \$30,000—the "Seventy-ninth Highlanders" made up principally of "red-headed Macs with a bad temper" as his advertisement for men put it. "With the father as Colonel and his three sons in the ranks the Seventy-ninth Highlanders marched out of New York to the skirl of the pipes, barelegged and in tartan."

While both he and his sons were in the war from beginning to end none of them

*Seventy-  
ninth  
Highlanders*

*Dr. S. R.  
Elliott*

were in the habit of talking of their adventures and not a great deal has been preserved concerning their experiences.

The New York Tribune of May 7, 1875, speaks of him as "emphatically one of the men who impart the element of the picturesque to common affairs. A person of very strong, original, eccentric character. A man of positive genius in his profession."

Dr. Elliott was buried in the Silver Mount Cemetery.

The New York Sun of December 1, 1909, contained a two column article on the editorial page by E. D. Doster entitled "A Man of Many Talents. The Life and Friendships of the Late Dr. S. R. Elliott." (Eldest son of Dr. S. M. Elliott.)

The doctor's virtues and accomplishments were so many that space permits hardly more than the mere cataloguing of them. We learn that even as a young boy his talents attracted attention from the distinguished men who were in the habit of visiting his father.

Gottschalk, the composer, noticed the dreamy melodies he composed and predicted for him a wonderful future as a musician and even gave him lessons.

His quaint verses attracted Longfellow who offered to bring him up in his own family and train him for a literary career.

At the University of Heidelberg his fame as a broadswordsmen was such that nearly fifty years later a young German "schlager," then champion, called on him to salute a legendary hero, the greatest "English" schlager the University had ever known.

In the Latin Quarter in Paris he studied music and medicine simultaneously; here there came to him high honors for his work



in the hospitals and for his achievements at the conservatory of music.

The fame of his musical gifts reached the ears of the Empress Eugenie, before whom he improvised, winning the applause of the imperial court.

When Garibaldi was wresting a united Italy from the Austrian, Dr. Elliott donned the red shirt of the Garibaldians and marched with a troop of Lombardy soldiery.

The British and American colonies of celebrities in literature, music and art in Rome and Florence were captivated by his address, his physical graces and his wonderful versatility, and flung their portals wide open to him. In Florence he frequented Mrs. Browning's evenings at the Casa Guidi.

He entered the Seventy-ninth Highlanders as a private, but soon became First Lieutenant, then Captain of Company K of this regiment. Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, an intimate friend of his father, offered him an important commission which he declined.

During '62 he served as assistant surgeon in the Sixty-third New York, the "Irish Brigade."

In '63 was surgeon in the Second Battalion, Hawkins Zouaves, and in the same year was Major in the Blair Rifles, Consolidated.

In '64 surgeon in the Fifth Heavy Artillery which post he held until he was mustered out at the close of the war.

He took honorable part in thirty engagements from Bull Run to Appomattox.

In '63 while home on a furlough he married Miss Amy Dinsmore, a cousin and a fellow pupil of Patti. His wife and his sister, Miss Elizabeth Elliott, returned with him to Washington and to Harpers Ferry where he

had charge of field hospitals. At the battle of Bull Run he carried from the field, at considerable personal risk, the body of his regimental commander, Colonel Cameron, son of the secretary of war.

He was seriously wounded in the head at the battle of Antietam when jumping his horse over a fence in a charge on the enemy.

Under a heavy fire he swam his horse across the Shenandoah river, towing after him, with the aid of a swimming orderly, a raft loaded with wounded men.

After the war he began the practice of medicine with his father.

He and his chum, who was later Justice Barrett, composed several sermons which were preached by a leading divine as his own and which became famous for their literary qualities and profound theological erudition.

During this period his friends were such men as Artemus Ward, Fitz James O'Brien, Henry Clapp, Edmund Clarence Stedman, "Private" Miles O'Reilly, George Arnold, General Devereau, Bob Wheat, Col. Thomas, Albert Pike, Professor Youmans, Walt Whitman, Charles A. Dana, William Henry Hurlbert, Andrew C. Wheeler, Parke Godwin, W. J. Stillman, George Fawcett Rowe, Bret Harte, Elihu Vedder, Charles Coleman, Hamilton Wilde, Edwin Booth, William Stuart, Madame Modjeska, Sara Jewett, Clara Louise Kellogg, and many others as well as the older generation who knew his father. His office in the University building was the rallying place of the wits and thinkers of the city.

In spite of the fact that he stood at the head of his profession and was kept excessively busy with his work, he yet found time

to meet with his friends and to develop his literary and musical talents.

It is told that on the eve of her first appearance in America, Madame Modjeska was brought to Dr. Elliott one morning. Her manager was in despair for she had lost her voice. She remained under the doctor's care during the day and was able to appear in the evening in perfect condition.

Dr. Elliott valued his physical strength and prowess above any of his other gifts. Indian clubs which he used habitually until a few years before his death were almost too heavy for the ordinary man to lift; he could crack a coin with his fingers or bend a poker with his biceps. On one occasion he carried five men up a long and steep flight of stairs. Billy Clarke, a fistic champion of the '70's, was the companion of his boxing bouts.

His memory was as phenomenal as his physical strength, once he read a poem that appealed to him he never forgot it; thus with music; when he heard an opera he would return home and repeat it in its entirety. Charles A. Dana once tested his memory for quotations but could not trip him.

He wrote prose for the Atlantic Monthly and Harper's Weekly and poems for the Churchman and the Congregationalist.

Such is an extremely brief summary of an unusual career.

The wayfarer now begins to catch his first real intimation of the scenic wonders that are to come. From this point on the man on foot begins to share with the householder the pictures that no mere words can trace, some bounded only by the heavens, some framed by swaying branches, for it is indeed a sultry summer day when no breeze stirs here.

*Louis A.  
Stirn*

*C. Allan  
Blythe*

*Convent  
Property*

It is, perhaps, a trifle difficult to say which outlook exceeds all others. Happily, each householder believes in his own, this no doubt because each lives with his particular view and only sees that of his neighbors incidentally. It holds for him the same intimate quality as do his family relationships. He sees it morning, noon and night, in storm and under sunswept skies, the twinkling night-lights form for him geometric designs or curves of beauty that can be had from no other angle.

The next house on the left is the concrete home of Louis A. Stirn built in 1908, and just beyond that the home of C. Allan Blythe, Jr., also of recent construction.

This hill slope is extremely irregular and, consequently, the houses are not necessarily set with the road, but rather accommodate themselves to the lay of the land, a series of ravines and shoulders. These two houses, situated within three hundred feet of each other, are possibly the best on the hill to use as illustrations of the marvelous variety of a scene which, in reality the same, is yet so individual to each. This is unquestionably due to the fact that no two foregrounds are similar and to the difference in the angle at which each house is set. Of these the one stands out on a slight jut of land and gazes off over the roofs below as from the edge of a declivity, while the eye of his neighbor follows down a grassy ravine, guarded by tall forest trees, to the distant vessels, or with a slight turn of the head he finds a portion of his picture framed by the branches of his woodland retainers.

On the right lies the Convent property. This land was purchased at the Howard sale, 1836, by Benjamin Wood who in July,

# SERPENTINE ROAD

35

1842, sold to John Anthon, and he in 1854 to Albert Brisbane, he in 1857 to Ezekiel J. Donnell, who lost the place through foreclosure proceedings and the sheriff sold it at auction in May, 1868, to Alexander Maitland for \$105. January, 1869, Maitland sold to Alexander D. Shaw for \$17,000. This reads as though Maitland's fairy god-mother had him in charge at the time, but the gentleman probably purchased a large sized mortgage with the property. In 1871 Shaw sold to John A. Cisco for \$32,500, and he in February, 1885, to Ellen E. Du Pont Irving, wife of A. D. Irving for \$20,000. The last transfer was to The Sisters, etc., who now conduct here a school and convent known as the "Congregation de Notre Dame."

It is believed that the house was erected by Albert Brisbane—1854-1857. Mr. William B. Duncan has told me that such was the fact and that Brisbane was interested in the socialistic teachings of Charles Fourier, who founded the communistic system known as Fourierism. According to his plan society was to be organized in associations united by the principle of attraction and arranged in groups according to occupations or capacities. All members of a group were to live in a common dwelling and each was guaranteed the means of self-support and opportunities for a harmonious development of all his faculties and tastes. The plan was brought to America about 1840. Mr. Brisbane started such a colony here, but like other schemes to make life pleasant for the lazy man at the expense of the worker it did not last. As Mr. Brisbane only owned the property for three years it is not clear how he could have done so much in such a short space of time, unless he con-

*E. J. Donnell*

*Alex. D.  
Shaw*

*A. D. Irving*

*Albert  
Brisbane*

*Cisco  
Property*

tinued to occupy the place after selling it.

More than one hundred years ago the northern part of the Cisco property was included in the church Glebe. Daniel D. Tompkins purchased about 1814, but when his troubles became acute it was sold under foreclosure proceedings and was conveyed to Caleb T. Ward. A suit in chancery was brought by the Tompkins heirs to set aside the deed to Ward, but was discontinued long years after. The transfers of the property are as follows:—

*Major  
George  
Howard*

October 21, 1830, Caleb T. Ward sold to Major George Howard, consideration \$850, being at the rate of \$100 per acre.

*John  
Anthon*

December 3, 1838, George Howard sold to John Anthon, consideration \$22,000. This included the dwelling erected by Howard, but as that is spoken of as a small frame building, the transaction would appear to have been a profitable one for him.

*Ernest  
Cazet*

June 15, 1855, John Anthon sold to Ernest Cazet, consideration, \$27,500.

*George Law*

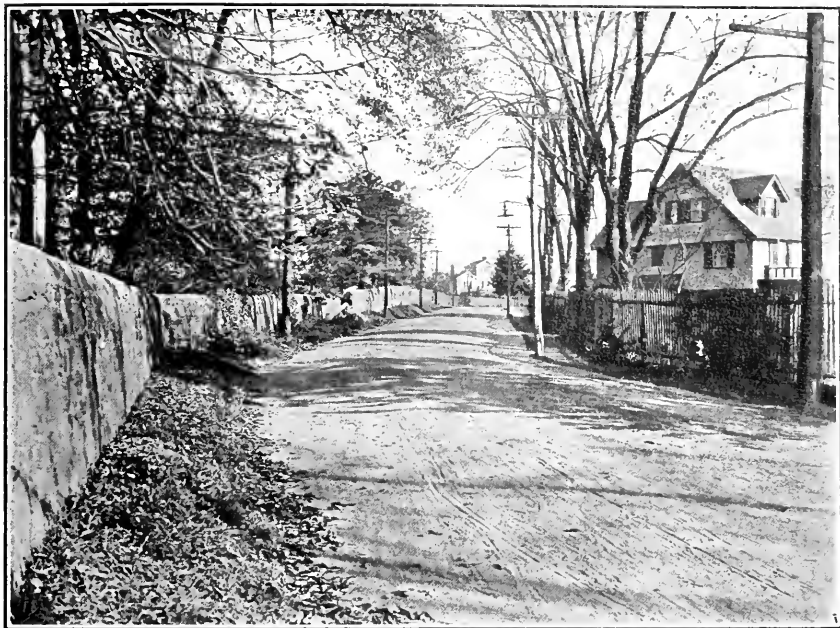
October 25, 1860, Ernest Cazet sold to George Law, consideration, \$40,000. In view of the fact that Cazet erected the house now standing and the stone wall which in part still surrounds the place, the price received must have represented a considerable loss.

*John J. Cisco*

June 4, 1869, George Law sold to John J. Cisco, consideration, \$75,000. Law erected the brick stable at a cost of \$20,000, and put in an expensive system of sewers and drains, two ponds and other improvements. He claimed to have expended for and on the place \$100,000.

*Otto P. Heyn*

The northern third of this property has recently been built upon by Otto P. Heyn, the house having been turned over by the



HOWARD AVENUE NORTH FROM THE CISCO GATE. ON THE RIGHT THE HOME OF C. ALLAN BLYTHE, IN THE DISTANCE THE "TOWER HOUSE," ERECTED BY DR. S. M. ELLIOTT, NOW OWNED AND OCCUPIED BY ERNEST F. SLOCUM.





contractor in July, 1913. This residence, being situated on the ridge, looks both to the west and east, furnishing its occupants with the glory of the setting sun on the one hand, while on the other it gazes on the orb of day as that light-giver shakes the morning mists from its face and looks over into the Narrows to discover what plunder Quarantine has gathered during the hours of darkness.

Major George Howard was born in East Windsor, Connecticut, January 23, 1787. He entered the United States Army from his native state and was honorably discharged June 15, 1815. For eleven years he was boarding officer of the port of New York, and, in 1830 was appointed keeper of public stores at Staten Island.

He married Sarah Trumbull, presumably of Connecticut, as her ancestors certainly were, owned a pew in the Dutch Reformed church at Tompkinsville and two lots in the cemetery belonging to that church. This cemetery was sold or exchanged and the bodies removed to the Silver Mount Cemetery where they are to be found in the "Church Lot" though there appears to be no record that the Major is buried here. He died July 13, 1851 and was buried from the residence of his son-in-law, Dr. James Harcourt, Factory Village, Staten Island.

As Mr. Hiram Smith, who has been kind enough to dig out the above Howard facts for me, has included the Major's children, it will do no harm to preserve the information here. "Possible children, Jedia—born March 11, 1811. Mary Anne—born November 5, 1814. Sarah Harper—born May 30, 1819. Daniel R. Hitchcock married, April 22, 1833. Mary Anne Howard. She died September 2,

*Major  
George  
Howard*

*Castleton  
Heights*

*Lover's  
Lane*

1875. When he married, second, December 27, 1886, Julia Trumbull Howard, (possibly the 'Jedia' above) sister of his first wife and widow of Dr. James Harcourt. She died in 1890. Daniel R. Hitchcock died March 31, 1891."

After disposing of his dwelling here the Major purchased land on St. Paul's avenue opposite the head of Hannah street and erected a brick dwelling, still standing, in which he resided until 1844.

In the good old days when Grymes Hill was known as Castleton Heights, there lived on its crest a fierce old war-horse whose two daughters shared honors as the beauties of the countryside, but such a fire-eater was the head of the house that the youth of the neighborhood stood afar off lamenting the cruelty of fate. However, this method could not last, being against all nature, and the moths kept narrowing the circle until one, more bold than his fellows, finally plunged within the flame and lost his wings, as his desire to use them, but gained that which appeared far more precious.

At that early period Howard avenue was a lover's lane fit for a fairy princess. In these primeval woods were many interesting nooks for young men and maidens, while the summer breezes that refreshed the hillside had a way of fanning the spark of love until it became a mighty flame. The lovers thoroughly tested each nook and corner and found none wanting until one day, coming to the far southern end of the hill, which was in those times known as Brimstone Hill, they fell beneath the baleful influence of a certain hollow from whose depths came a cold biting wind which ever shiv-

ered through the leaves. So wrapped were our young friends in their own imaginings, however, that they failed to note the change in temperature and set themselves on the very edge of this clove to discuss those abstruse questions which naturally arise on such occasions. They so placed themselves, as it happened, that only the young man caught the cooling breeze in the region of his fluttering heart, and as they sat a—to him—unaccountable change came over the spirit of his dreams. The proceedings which heretofore had been more than interesting began to pall. He even discovered that the maiden could walk without assistance. She eyed him curiously as they returned toward her father's dwelling and speculated inwardly on the frigidity which by this time had worked through his breast and particularly affected his good right arm which was refusing its too evident duty.

As love's fitful fever subsided, the youth's attentions became more and more intermittent until he fell away, so to speak, entirely, and there was a long period when the sighing of the winds around the house found an echo in the breast of the forlorn maiden. It would appear that about this time the stern parent began to fret over the situation, for a friend who happened to call as the bleak winds of autumn were spreading desolation through the trees found the old gentleman industriously polishing a pair of antique dueling pistols that long since adorned the sash of an ancestor whose record had been carefully notched upon their butts. The long, bright barrels attracted the visitor's attention and he asked concerning their history. The Major, however, was not inclined to talk overmuch, but

*Discord*

*Love  
Triumphant*

*John  
Anthon*

rather grumbled to himself, sputtering in an excited fashion that in nowise became his gray hairs. The caller finally gathered from the fragments of conversation which fell to him that there was trouble in store for the reluctant lover and hastening his departure sought out the young man and explained what the future held for him. And now a most wonderful thing happened. The love which had for so many weeks lain dormant suddenly surged back to its proper channels. No longer did the wind sigh about the house, but called joyfully to the reunited lovers whose course ran on so smooth a track thereafter that even the refurbished pistols that had been hung in a conspicuous place above the mantel by a thoughtful parent ceased to hold the attention of the gallant youth.

Ever after all true lovers avoided the darksome hollow that had so nearly engulfed the joy and romance of young love in its treacherous embrace, and only the snake and the toad slipped silently through its slimy ooze.

As before stated Howard sold to John Anthon in 1838, he caught the real estate fever and on July 19, 1842, purchased lots 14 to 19 inclusive, Howard map, these adjoined his place on the north and he had the entire property surveyed and platted. Lot 6 which contained the dwelling was about 400 feet wide; between that and Eddy street lay lot 7 which was something over 200 feet wide while north of lot 6 lay five lots each 100 feet in width. Lots 1 and 2, the most northerly, are now occupied by the Convent. He expended for all the property \$27,500 and sold for \$32,500, having occupied the dwelling over sixteen years as

well; every one seems to have made money in real estate in those flush times.

John Anthon was a notable member of a notable family. The first of the name to land on this soil passed Staten Island in 1757 on his way to New York a prisoner of war, and no doubt looked up to these heights with any but friendly eyes. This was George Christian Anthon, a surgeon in the employ of the Dutch West India Company, though himself a German. A ship on which he sailed was captured by a British privateer and carried into New York; being a skilled man of medicine he soon found employment as assistant surgeon in the General Military Hospital at Albany. After a brief period here he was appointed assistant surgeon in the First Battalion, 60th Regiment, Royal Americans, and with his company was sent to Detroit in 1760. Here he married and here his son John was born in 1784. Shortly after the Revolutionary war he removed to New York.

John Anthon graduated from Columbia in 1801, studied law and soon became the foremost lawyer of his time in this city. He was in command of a company of militia during the war of 1812 and, served in the defense of New York City. He was also employed during this period as judge-advocate and accumulated many honors in the course of his long life.

Charles Edward Anthon, son of John, was for many years professor of Belles-Lettres and History in the "Free Academy," later known as the College of the City of New York. During the years 1850 and 1851 he gathered material for a history of Staten Island which he never published, but which

*G. C.  
Anthon*

*John  
Anthon*

*C. E.  
Anthon*

*Wm. H.  
Anthon*

has been liberally used by succeeding historians as it supplies much that would have been lost had it not been recorded at the time. Sheriff Denyse remembers Charles E. Anthon well; says he was a great walker and a fine man. At one time, probably after the place on Grymes Hill had been sold, he boarded at the hotel of Frank Jones, Bay and Griffin streets, Stapleton.

William Henry Anthon, son of John, followed in the footsteps of his father and was admitted to the bar in 1848. He soon became distinguished in the profession and in 1858 was one of those who defended the rioters who burned the quarantine buildings on Staten Island.

*Ernest  
Cazet*

Ernest Cazet came to this country from the wine district of southern France, a youth of eighteen with "no money, but unlimited credit." By the time he arrived at the age of thirty he was a rich man, not all of it having been made in the wine business, however, as his speculations in New York real estate appear to have been wonderfully profitable; as an instance, two lots on lower Broadway are cited, these he purchased for about \$25,000 and sold not long after to the Produce Exchange for about \$150,000. He also owned several blocks on Sixth avenue in the dry goods district which were the cause of much gain, but reverses finally came and he lost much that had made life so fair a prospect.

Mr. Cazet purchased the Anthon property with the idea of making his home here for the remainder of his life. The Howard dwelling was sold to one Geshidt, an architect, and removed to Houseman street, near the Little Clove road; it was later used by Italians and finally burned. Mr.

Cazet erected the present building and surrounded his land with the stone wall which to a considerable extent continues to adorn the locality, but when his losses came he was stricken with a serious disorder and returned to France for treatment. There he was advised that a cure would be a matter of years and came back to New York, closed up his interests and returned to his native France only to die within a few years.

Mr. Cazet is spoken of as a gentleman and a friend of the needy, as well as a shrewd business man, and appears to have left only pleasant memories behind him. He sold to George Law, one of the conditions insisted on by the latter being that the contents of the house should go with the place; this was presumably because of the richness of the furnishings, everything having been imported from France, the carpets were of such quality that after fifty-five years of use they are still in good condition.

We find a legend to the effect that the stone wall which surrounds the Cisco place was constructed with slave labor, but as Emancipation day came to Staten Island, July 4, 1825, and Mr. Cazet not until October 25, 1855, the legend can hardly be taken seriously. It is a fact, however, that the wall was erected by Frederick Law Olmstead who did considerable of his early landscaping on Staten Island. The construction is peculiar in that the wall is built on the surface of the ground without foundation, the interior being filled with loose stone and although it has been standing full fifty-five years it is to-day as good as when built.

These walls are one of the most picturesque features of the road and it will be

*George Law*

*Frederick  
Law  
Olmstead*

a sad day for the hilltop when the time of their fall arrives. The effect of exclusiveness has been heightened to some extent by bits of broken glass set in the top of the wall as more than one marauder has been pained to discover.

I have been told that George Law purchased this property as a home for his daughter, but that the lady found the hill too dull, preferring brick and mortar to the enchantment of nature. It is said that there was a husband who honored the army with his time and attention, and who was chiefly celebrated for the length of his hair, but not much appears to have been handed down concerning this branch of the family.

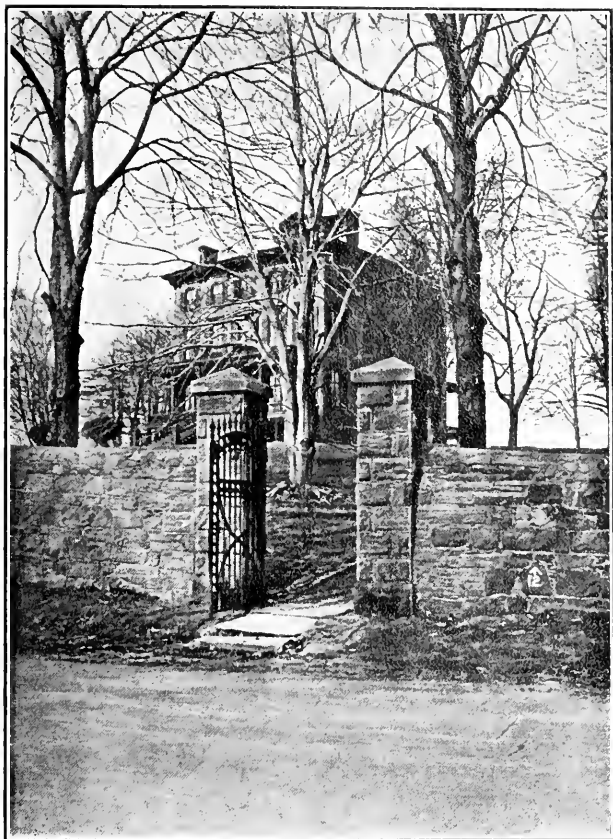
George Law himself was a self-made man having built his success on a foundation of industry and study. A farmer's son, he learned the mason's trade, secured employment on the Delaware and Hudson canal, employed his leisure in study and made himself a good engineer and draughtsman. Became a large railroad and canal contractor. In 1837 went to New York, obtained contracts on the Croton water works, built High Bridge over the Harlem. In 1842 became manager of the Dry Dock Bank. Purchased and extended the Harlem and Mohawk railroads. Assumed the contract to carry the mails to California, 1849 built the first passenger steamer for Panama. Purchased the steam ferry to Staten Island and Brooklyn. Was known as "Live Oak George".

John Jay Cisco. The name Cisco is an abbreviation of Francisco, the prefix having been dropped several generations since. After having served an apprenticeship of nine years, Mr. Cisco started in the whole-

*George  
Law*

*John Jay  
Cisco*





THE CISCO-LAW-CAZET HOUSE, ERECTED ABOUT 1855 BY ERNEST CAZET. THE WALL SURROUNDING THE PLACE WAS BUILT AT THE SAME TIME UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF FREDERICK LAW OLNSTEAD, THE NOTED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.



sale dry goods business in New York, and retired at the age of thirty-six with a fortune. Some eleven years later, or in 1853, he was appointed by President Pierce, much against his inclination, Assistant Treasurer of the United States, and placed in charge of the Sub-Treasury in New York. When President Buchanan came into office he attempted to resign, but was persuaded to remain and when Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated he again made an effort to retire, but his administration had been such that both Mr. Lincoln and Secretary Chase insisted that it was his duty to remain and he acquiesced. His relations with bankers and merchants were such that he was of great service during the Civil War in placing early loans, and at one time actually paid the interest on certain bonds himself rather than allow the hard-pressed government to default. As a government officeholder Mr. Cisco stands almost alone. Mr. Cisco was finally allowed to retire in 1864, but was immediately appointed, at the instance of Mr. Lincoln, a government director and Treasurer of the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1865 the banking house of John J. Cisco & Son was established. Mr. Cisco died on March 23, 1884. The above account is taken chiefly from the New York Herald of March 24, 1884, with some additions by Hiram Smith and Mrs. Angus McKenzie, grandchildren.

About a year after the death of John J. Cisco his son, John A. Cisco, removed from his own home, now the Convent, to this place, and it still remains in the family.

Late in 1913 George Cisco, grandson of John J. Cisco, commenced the erection of a home at the corner of Howard avenue and

*John A.  
Cisco*

*George  
Cisco*

Eddy street. The white stuccoed sides of this, gleaming over the old stone wall and half shaded by tall hornbeams, has an air of seclusion and aloofness that a building so close to the road could not hope to possess except it were walled about, as is the case here.

*James  
Morgan  
Davis*

*Thomas  
Eaken*

On the east side of the road lies the James Morgan Davis estate, "East Over". October 16, 1841, Caleb T. Ward sold this property to Harvey North, "late of New Orleans," consideration \$5,940. October 12, 1853, North sold to Thomas Eaken "of Nashville," consideration \$12,000, and Eakin erected the present dwelling, but died shortly after and his family did not long occupy the place. Mr. E. D. Clark who came to this place when a boy in November, 1843, tells me that his father, Eusebius Clark, was employed by Mr. North to lay out the grounds, a house being erected for his occupancy in which he lived thirteen years.

*Harvey  
North*

There were two brothers North, in the importing business in New York one of whom, Harvey, married a French woman. He expected to build a handsome house and make this his home, but his wife refused to live in this country and he went to France with her. Mr. Clark caused the well, 102 feet deep, to be dug; up to this time Logan Spring had never run out of water but since has gone dry on occasion and it is supposed this well tapped the water supply of the spring.

*Supply  
Water  
on Grymes  
Hill*

The water supply on this high land is erratic, there have been in the past at least three natural ponds here which must have been fed by springs, two on the Cisco place and one on the Kendall place and yet the well on the Cisco place went down 117 feet before water was reached and that

on the Kendall place is 130 feet deep.

Many years ago Mr. Davis purchased the property from Mrs. Eaken and it is still the Davis home. The architect of the dwelling was James Renwick, one of New York's most noted architects. Grace Church, Broadway and Tenth Street, and the Catholic Cathedral, Fifth avenue, are among the creations of Mr. Renwick's genius.

James Morgan Davis had a business career that was of unusual interest. He was a member of the New York Stock Exchange by the time he was old enough to vote, and retired from business at the age of twenty-five.

Mr. Davis began his business career in the stock brokerage office of Travers & Jerome, and when the latter retired was admitted to the firm, which was then known as Travers & Co. By the time he was twenty-five his health became impaired and he concluded to give up work and go abroad. His partner, William R. Travers, wished him to retain his interest in the firm and step back into the harness when his health would permit, but Mr. Davis preferred to leave no loose ends that might carry worry into his retirement, and refused to entertain the proposition.

After remaining inactive for seven to eight years he entered the Wall street arena again as a member of the firm of Work, Davis & Barton.

Among others, the firm acted as broker for Commodore Vanderbilt, and it was during this period that the Commodore cornered Erie. He had Jay Gould "busted," and had it not been for the latter's methods of high finance, would have completely cleaned him out, but the ingenious Mr.

*James  
Renwick*



Gould moved over into Jersey, where the New York courts could not reach him, and being in complete control of the Erie, issued a convertible bond which he immediately converted into stock. This he put on the market in large quantities, and as the process could be repeated ad libitum, owing to the lax railroad laws of the day, he rather had the Commodore "on the hip."

The case was immediately thrown into the courts and the Commodore brought suit against Gould. Work, Davis & Barton also brought suit in the names of certain customers, and it was here that Mr. Davis discovered the real character of Frank Work, which proved to be anything but lovely. Work suggested that in order to prevent the dragging of all members of the firm into the court and interfering with its business, suit be brought in his name; this was done and Work was left to engineer the details.

One fine morning Mr. Davis saw in his newspaper that the Commodore had compromised his suit out of court, and knowing that Work would, of course, do likewise, called on him for an accounting, but the latter insisted that his suit had been dropped and that he had received nothing beyond attorney's fees. This was so palpably untrue that Davis threatened suit, but to have brought suit would have dragged the Commodore in, and compelled him to uncover his hand, and this the firm could not afford to do. The firm was, however, immediately dissolved, as neither of the other members cared to be longer associated with Work.

In 1874 the firm of Davis & Freeman was formed with Commodore Vanderbilt as a special partner and, some six years later, or when Mr. Davis was forty-two years of



HOWARD AVENUE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE DAVIS GATE. THE AVENUE WAS OPENED FROM EDDY STREET NORTH BY OR BEFORE 1836 BY MAJOR GEORGE HOWARD, WHO ERECTED THE FIRST DWELLING ON GRYMES HILL IN 1830 ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT CISCO HOUSE.





## SERPENTINE ROAD

49

age, he retired from business permanently.

The Davis family came to Staten Island in 1832 from Rhode Island, and James Morgan Davis was born here in 1837, and always regarded himself as a full-fledged Staten Islander.

In the southwest corner of Howard avenue and Eddy street stands the dwelling of J. D. Lawrence. This is one of two houses erected by William Butler Duncan about 1870. Apparently these were to be the nucleus of a small colony, but the buildings did not rent as expected and the venture went no further. About 1875 Mr. Lawrence purchased, after having rented for a short time, and he has occupied the property ever since. The second house stood at the back of the Critten place and was later moved to the opposite side of Duncan avenue, where it still stands.

The before-settlement history of the Lawrence and Critten properties will be found under the description of the Hunt grounds.

Next south stands the home of Mrs. De Frees Critten, "Olive Crest." In January, 1874, Arthur Gilman, architect, purchased the land from Wm. B. Duncan, paying \$15,000; it was he who erected the dwelling now standing, but it appears to have been too much of a load for his bank account as we find the property again in the possession of Mr. Duncan. In June, 1879, it was sold by order of the court as part of the bankrupt Duncan estate, being purchased by the estate of Orondates Mauran, apparently to protect a mortgage. April 30, 1881, the Mauran estate sold to Davis Johnson. July 8, 1886, Johnson sold to Charles McNamee. November 23, 1886, McNamee to Anna E. Lord

*J. D.  
Lawrence*

*Olive Crest  
Arthur  
Gilman*

*Davis  
Johnson  
Chas.  
McNamee*

*Castleton  
Heights*

*Arthur  
Gilman*

*Davis  
Johnson*

*Anna  
E. Lord*

and October 3, 1895, Lord to De Frees Critten. The plot is known as lots 5 and 8 on a "map of valuable property in the village of Edgewater, Staten Island, sold June 19, 1879, under judgment of the New York Supreme Court by Theodore C. Vermilye, Jr., referee in suit of James E. Mauran as executor, etc., against William B. Duncan and others. George M. Root, city surveyor."

In the deed from Johnson to McNamee, 1886, the hill is called "Castleton Heights" thus it would appear that even so late as twenty-five years ago the present name was not universally in use.

Arthur Gilman was an architect of considerable note, not only as a designer but also as lecturer and at least to some extent as a writer. Before coming to New York and while a resident of Boston he advocated the filling in and improvement of the Back Bay, and it is claimed that the handsome features of Commonwealth avenue are due almost entirely to his efforts. In 1865 he removed to New York. The Equitable Life building which burned during the winter of 1911-12 was his work and he had much to do with the designing of the Capitol at Albany. St. John's church and parsonage, Clifton, are also of his creating. Mr. Gilman is recalled by his old neighbors as an unusually pleasant companion and exceedingly social, a great after-dinner story-teller and raconteur.

Davis Johnson was a broker and while recalled pleasantly by his one time neighbors I have not come on any store of information concerning him.

While the real estate records show that Charles McNamee was the next to purchase the property and that he in turn sold to Anna E. Lord, it is believed that he was

merely acting for Mrs. Lord who was his mother-in-law. He or she called the place "The Beacon", an appropriate name surely and the more so as the earliest known name of the ridge was "Signal Hill."

The man who is remembered for his kindly and neighborly qualities, who reverses Shakespeare's oft-quoted lines, "the evil men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones," has accomplished more than will most of us. Such was De Frees Critten, who is recalled lovingly by his neighbors as "the best man that ever lived," and who also commanded the admiration and respect of the men with whom he associated.

Mr. Critten was in a way a forty-niner, that is, he was born in Piqua, Ohio, in that year of the gold fever, which may or may not have had something of an influence on his acquisitive powers later on in life, but it is more probable that the early struggle to support a widowed mother developed a natural ability to improve his opportunities. In 1886 he came to New York and formed the firm of Critten, Cliff & Co., and was on the high road to a large success when death overtook him. His hobby was his home, but he was the same clean man in business that his neighbors knew. "He was known throughout the business channels of the country by his manly dealings and upright character, and was respected for his integrity and honesty of purpose."

Mr. Critten died in 1907, having been a resident of Staten Island for twenty years.

Still south stands the home of Mrs. Charles W. Hunt. An abstract of title gives us the early history of this place and to a great extent that of the Lawrence and

*De Frees  
Critten*

*Mrs. Chas.  
W. Hunt*

Critten homes as well. As far back as 1789, this, with the exception of a strip at the back, was part of the Cornelius Corson farm. This portion descended to his son Daniel C. Corson. Was sold by him in 1806 to James Dobson, who immediately disposed of it to David Mersereau and he in 1814 to Daniel D. Tompkins. The strip at the back of the place was willed in 1798 by Wilhelmus Vreeland to his son Eder Vreeland, it having been aforetime probably a portion of the Hendrick Hendrickson grant from the Dongan trustees.\* In 1814 Eder Vreeland sold to Daniel D. Tompkins. Thus the latter came into possession of the tract which is now bounded by the Turnpike, Eddy street, Howard avenue and the Kendall place.

Daniel D. Tompkins fell on evil days and in 1817 mortgaged the property to Thomas Hulme, who foreclosed in 1822. He sold to Caleb T. Ward in 1826 and he to Orondates Mauran June 14, 1831, and Mr. Mauran probably erected the present building immediately as Mr. Betton, a great-grandson, has the record book of the wine cellar which begins with the year 1833. This would make it the oldest house now standing on the hill. The deed to Mauran gives the impression that neither Eddy street nor Howard avenue at this point were then established as Ward agrees therein to allow an avenue on the north side of the property fifty-six feet in width and on the east side of the property forty feet in width. Eddy street was named by Mr. Mauran in honor of

*Orondates  
Mauran*

*Eddy St.  
Howard Av.*

\* NOTE.—Wilhelmus Vreeland willed his farm to his two sons, Eder and William. It may be interesting to note in this connection that Mr. Delavan believes the line of boulders which leaves the Turnpike opposite the division line of the Cisco and Convent properties to be the line which divided the Vreeland farm between the two sons, 1798.



THE KAUPÉ-HUNT-McNAMEE-DUNBAR-MAURAN HOUSE. THE OLDEST HOUSE NOW STANDING ON GRYMES HILL. BUILT ABOUT 1831-2. IT WAS STIPULATED IN THE DEED TO MAURAN THAT THE PRESENT EDDY STREET AND A PORTION OF HOWARD AVENUE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOR HIS CONVENIENCE. EDDY STREET WAS NAMED AFTER MAURAN'S FATHER-IN-LAW, CHIEF JUSTICE EDDY OF RHODE ISLAND.



his father-in-law, Samuel Eddy, chief justice of Rhode Island. Mrs. Mauran died about 1855 and the house stood vacant for some time thereafter.

Orondates Mauran died October 6, 1846, leaving a widow and nine children. James Eddy Mauran, the elder, was made executor of the estate and in November, 1868, he sold the Hunt property to Edward E. Dunbar and at the same time the remainder of the tract to William Butler Duncan. At the instance of Mr. Duncan it was agreed that the joint property of himself and Mr. Dunbar should be restricted to residential purposes and that this restriction should be insisted on in future sales.

Edward E. Dunbar married Sophia R. Sterry Mauran, a niece of O. Mauran. He died February 18, 1870, Mrs. Dunbar and two children, Edward Mauran Dunbar and Clyde Trippett Dunbar surviving him. In 1871 Mrs. Dunbar sold to William B. Duncan. In 1875 Duncan (William B.), Sherman & Co. assigned and in 1881 James McNamee purchased the Hunt portion of the property. He died in 1896 and in the fall of 1899 the widow sold to C. W. Hunt.

June, 1913, Mrs. Hunt sold to W. Kaupe.

The Hunt house was built in the most substantial manner. Its beams were hewn from oak trees that grew on the place and it is as sound and strong to-day as when erected over seventy-five years ago. Mr. Mauran called his home "Monocnong," an Indian word which the owner translated as meaning "surrounded by trees." The name does not now apply as formerly, as the hand of time has dealt heavily with the timber in these parts. In those days the entrance to the place was from Eddy street

*Edward E.  
Dunbar*

*Monocnong*

*J. C.  
Mauran*

and the front door of the house was on its north side.

As in the case of the Anthon family the Mauran ancestor came to this country a prisoner. Joseph Carlo Mauran, a native of Villefranche, Italy, was impressed when twelve years old on board of a British man-of-war; he was kept a virtual prisoner for some two years, but while the vessel lay in the harbor of New London, he escaped and in the course of time found his way to Barrington, Rhode Island, where he settled down and took unto himself a wife. He soon tired of farming and took to the sea and by 1776 was a man of importance. During the early years of the Revolution, Rhode Island built two "row-galleys" both of which he commanded with honor to himself; each carried a crew of fifty men, mounted one eighteen pounder and several swivel guns. In 1778 he received Lettres of Marque and Reprisal as commander of the private schooner of war, "Weazel," but after that we hear of him as a merchantman.

*Oroondates  
Mauran*

Oroondates or Orondates, as the name was later spelled, was born in Barrington in 1791. His singular name is accounted for as follows: His mother owned a book entitled "Rival Kings or the Loves of Oroondates and Statira," by John Banks, and it is supposed she confounded the name with Onorato, an old Mauran family name.

Oroondates married Martha Eddy, and removed to New York where he went into some mercantile business. He was passionately fond of music and was proprietor of the first Italian Opera House erected in New York. Among his other ventures was



an interest with Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt in the Staten Island ferry. Old Staten Islanders used to say that it was Mauran's money that first put the commodore on his feet and gave him his start, but I do not know how much of fact there may be in this.

He erected this house on Grymes Hill, then known as Castleton Heights, as a summer residence and as many opera singers and musicians from abroad brought letters to him, and as he was lavishly hospitable it is to be presumed that notables of the musical world were frequent visitors to this hilltop and that Monocnong was as musical as is its pleasant sounding name. One of his intimate friends was Captain Marryat who might easily have found inspiration in our view for a background for some story.

James Eddy Mauran, eldest son of above, was a noted antiquarian and scholar; while in New York he was a dealer in books, more particularly rare volumes of which he himself was a large collector, he was also an authority on Fourteenth century matters and heraldry and was exceedingly clever in the art of inlaying prints for the purpose of extra illustration.

James McNamee was born in New York and graduated from Columbia at the head of his class. As a young man he was familiar with Staten Island and no sooner was he free to do so than he and ——— Vanderbilt, daughter of Captain Jake, caused the preacher to say those mystic words which flatly contradict the multiplication table. In the course of time he purchased the Mauran property and resided here until his death.

*Jas. Eddy  
Mauran*

*James  
McNamee*

Mr. McNamee became prominent in the profession of the law, and was also something of a politician though he appears to have been too honest to have been much of a success in the latter line; in fact, his disinclination to any but a straight course was so pronounced that he became more than distasteful to those who are disinterested enough to devote all their time to government.

One of his chief hobbies was "good roads," and I am told that he worked long with the legislature at Albany in order to get a bill through which would deal fairly with the question and that the first good roads on the island were largely, if not wholly, due to his efforts.

Captain Vanderbilt, his father-in-law, was everlastingly rubbing the wrong way such neighbors who owned fast horses as he met on the highway, for the Captain never could take anybody's dust and consequently he was much sought after by those who had claims for damages against him and Mr. McNamee was kept busy defending him.

Charles W. Hunt who came to Grymes Hill in 1900 began his business career on Staten Island about 1868 in the storing and handling of coal. The clumsy methods then in use suggested to his inventive mind the present system of handling through the use of an automatic railroad by which coal is lifted from barges and carried back on an elevated track to be dumped automatically at any desired point. This led to other inventions and soon Mr. Hunt was one of the foremost men in his line, the handling and storage of coal in large quantities.

The coal stations of the United States Navy at Guantanamo, Puget Sound and

*Chas. W.  
Hunt*

Manila, as well as other large plants in South Africa, Europe and Australia, are of his creation. His inventions reduced the cost of handling coal from 30 to 3 cents per ton. He also applied the principle to the handling of freight, and this by no means covers the list of his activities. As a mechanical engineer and inventor he was known throughout the world, and was a member of many societies and clubs which have to do with engineering and its allied interests.

Mr. Hunt's kindly and practical nature was early recognized when he was assigned by Secretary Stanton during the Civil War to the care of the thousands of negroes who flocked into the Union lines from the Southern states. These he taught to care for themselves by furnishing work and teaching them to be self-supporting.

An illuminating side light on the man's character is the way in which he used his holidays in photographing the old buildings of Staten Island. He went at it methodically, filing the negatives as they were finished under numbers so that any one of them could be found readily when wanted. A number of the buildings so photographed have since been destroyed and these negatives are possibly the only records extant. Even his method of numbering the negatives was unique as the numbers used included the date on which the picture was taken making other record unnecessary.

Opposite to the three last mentioned places stand the recently erected dwellings of William Horrmann and Thomas Avery Hine and Charles Gilbert Hine. They purchased together the Robert Bonner tract in July, 1909. All this property bounded on the east by the Richmond

*Wm.  
Horrmann  
T. A. Hine  
C. G. Hine*

*The  
Wonderful  
View*

road, on the south by the Strohmeier, Drucklieb and Kendall properties, on the west by Duncan avenue and a continuing line through the Cisco property, and on the north by a line which includes most of the Cisco place, and all of the Davis property was sold in 1806 by Daniel C. Corson to James Dobson, who the same day sold to David Mercereau, and he to Daniel D. Tompkins in 1814.

The property of William Horrmann, extending from Howard avenue to the old Richmond road, now Vanduzer street, consisted originally of three knolls of graduated height, whose rounded tops probably looked much as they did when the glaciers retired from this region. On the highest of these the house is set, its one hundred and twenty feet added to the three hundred and twenty feet which nature provides, elevates the "crow's nest" to a point in the upper air from which the horizon line can be seen around the complete circle—north, east, south and west—a glorious panorama.

Grymes Hill has always been noted for its wonderful view and as we have reached the point from which the view is best observed from the road suppose we stop a moment in our mad career and attempt to grasp it.

A distance of sky and wooded shore pleasantly dotted with country homes; a middle distance of water with passing sails and pennants of smoke, and a bit more near vessels at anchor—fishermen, square-riggers, and tramp steamers, the latter mostly Irish if one can judge by the evidences of red flannel, running through all shades to a sweaty pink, which exude from seeming rents in their outer garments. A fore-

ground crowded with small homes set about with a certain abandon that harmonizes delightfully with the general lack of straight lines.

Such is the impression after one has recovered from the first startling magnificence of the picture and before he begins to discover its lesser details.

Toward the north we see west of the Statue of Liberty, Jersey City and the Palisades of the Hudson when the weather and the smoke permit, the Upper Bay and the jagged peaks of New York, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the City of Homes itself. At our feet lies the village of Stapleton, beyond, the Narrows and Bay Ridge, and the early riser can see the morning sun glisten on Jamaica Bay; further to the south is to be noted Gravesend Bay, Coney Island and the Atlantic Ocean, whose far horizon line is about twenty-five miles distant. Still further toward the right lies Sandy Hook, the Lower Bay and the blue Highlands.

At night there are within view from here eight lighthouses and two light-ships—the Highland light, the two lights on Sandy Hook, Romer Shoal light, West Bank light, the red flash of Norton's Point at the west end of Coney Island, and toward the north Robbins Reef light and the double red light on Castle William, Governor's Island; the Ambrose Channel light-ship twenty miles away, a flashing white light on the horizon above the western point of Coney Island, and the Scotland lightship, one steady white light, only to be seen on exceptionally clear nights. Before the land held so many electric lights it was possible to catch the glow from the Fire Island light, forty miles

*Extent of  
the View*

*Eight Light-  
houses and  
two Light-  
Ships*

*The View  
at Night*

distant, but in these days the competition is too keen.

The view from this hill at night is one of the wonders of the world; to see the moon rise from the ocean above the summer lights of Coney Island is a liberal education in art. Coney Island is as though the Gods had set the stars in fantastic design for some celestial festival; the Shore Road is platted in brilliant points which outline the further side of the Narrows, the streets running back into Bay Ridge are festoons of sparkles. When we are to have a southerly wind all these lights wink in such knowing fashion that there is no mistaking the signal. New York's brilliant array is capped by the Singer Building while the Metropolitan tower flashes the time to us each fifteen minutes. Both north and south the water is alive with winking gas buoys, while tugs and steamers trying to turn an honest penny are so many fireflies on the wing.

The heavenly bodies descended to earth lie at our feet; again the Dipper points the way to the North Star. What though the latter be an arc light does it not help the belated wayfarer to lay a course for home, its celestial prototype does no more for the mariner. But probably the lights behind shaded windows furnish the greatest opportunity to the prophetic soul. There they lie, so many winking eyes, as shadowy figures pass and repass telling of home and fireside or, as time grows late, suggesting to one a sick bed, to another love's young dream, both calling for late hours and low-turned lights I am informed.

To sit here of a quiet summer night and catch the subdued murmur from the valley, the call of children at play, blending



AS THE DAYS BEGIN TO SHORTEN THE FIRST WARM RAYS OF THE EARLY SUN ON THE NIGHT-CHILLED EARTH BRING FORTH VAPORS THAT CONSPIRE WITH THE SMOKE FROM MANY BREAKFAST FIRES TO SOFTEN THE ANGLES OF STAPLETON. THE DISTANT OBJECTS, SUGGESTED RATHER THAN SEEN, ARE NOT BELATED SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT, BUT RATHER SUBSTANTIAL SHAPES OF WOOD AND IRON THAT BRING TO THIS PORT MUCH SPOIL FROM FOREIGN LANDS.





with the joyous barking of distant dogs is enough to endow the bosom of a wooden Indian with sentiment.

Travelers generally compare this view to that from Mount Vesuvius over the Bay of Naples and usually to the disadvantage of the latter. There is undoubtedly no spot in the world where so much of beauty and human interest combine to hold the attention. It must be seen many times and under varying conditions to be fully appreciated. All the commerce of the greatest city and port of the country passes through our backyard—the Narrows—great steamers accumulate during the night until it is no unusual thing for the rising sun to look down on a dozen or fifteen of the largest passenger carriers the world knows, waiting for the visit of the Quarantine doctors to set them free. When we consider that the loss of the Titanic was estimated, vessel and contents, at many millions, some idea of the enormous values that pass before us may be had.

The early morning fog and mist effects give us some of the most exquisite pictures that the mind can conceive, and the gorgeous sunrises that so often introduce our days are of infinite variety. Allow me to quote Robert Browning for a brief space:

“Day!

Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;  
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spurting and suppressed it lay:  
For not a froth-flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;  
But forth one wavelet, then another,  
curled,

*No Other  
View Com-  
pares With  
It*

*Early Morn-  
ing Effects*

*Variety of  
the View.*

Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,

Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world."

Under the action of a strong wind I have seen the fog peeled off the surface of the water as one might lift a sheet from a bed. But possibly the most weird and startling fog effect is confined to a gully on the eastern slope of this hill just south of Eddy street. The currents of air steal up and down this depression without much regard to what the wind is doing elsewhere and when the fog is abroad it is sometimes gently wafted back and forth through this trough in a way to give a sensitive person the creeps. Particularly is this so when the occurrence happens after dark—the gliding of this mystic white figure about the hill slope in the quiet of the night can never be forgotten once it is seen.

Immediately beneath us spreads a hillside rough hewn by the elements which carries an extremely sparse vegetation. As the grass here takes on a warm tint with which to meet the coming crispness of fall we have a singularly beautiful effect when the rainy day comes, then the wind animates the dullest blade among them, the wet freshens the greens and reds and browns with their varying shades until the life and color are a magical sight. While the wandering footpath that is ever seeking an easier way or the glisten of a wet boulder gives point and character to the foreground, for the rumpled land is but a foreground after all, leading the eye on to the jumbled homes and the busy thoroughfare we know as the Narrows.

## SERPENTINE ROAD

63

No one description can fit this ever changing picture. Sometimes it is the gray light of early evening with gray clouds above a blue film spread over the houses beneath us, and quiet gray water beyond, picked out with a square-rigger or two and a handful of tramp steamers.

Or it is all lines. The brown smoke lies in level lines, the quiet waters carry long slicks, distant Jamaica Bay is another line, the clouds help, most of the visible roadways of the village middle-distance run north and south carrying out the effect. Some tall smokestacks, the city dock, masts of vessels and the derricks of the wrecking company but add a few bits of cross-hatching.

The George H. Kendall place, "Kenwood," Madame Suzette Grymes purchased in 1836. Before the Civil War Staten Island was a notable resort for Southerners and that probably accounts for the discovery of Grymes Hill by Madame Grymes. This wilderness was just beginning to blossom into a homeland. Major Howard's dwelling had been standing about five years, his real estate boom was well under way and the Mauran house had also been erected, when Madame Grymes "in jack boots, girded up her skirts, and with axe in hand struck out a clearing for her future home."

Before becoming the wife of John Randolph Grymes, a noted New Orleans lawyer, the lady was the widow of Governor Claiborne of Louisiana. So far as can be learned Mr. Grymes seldom visited these parts.

The real estate records show that during the years 1836 to 1843 Madame Grymes made four purchases of property on the

*Kenwood  
Suzette  
Grymes*

1836

*Capo  
di Monte*

*Wm. Butler  
Duncan*

*George H.  
Kendall*

*Suzette  
Grymes*

west side of Howard avenue including some twenty acres for which she paid \$8,300; and during the years 1839 to 1846 three purchases between the avenue and the Richmond road for which she paid \$7,400. William Butler Duncan has told me that she erected the house on the west side of the road first; Mr. C. Drucklieb has been told by members of the family that the house on the east side was the first. The shape of the former tends to confirm Mr. Duncan as it looks like the creation of a Southerner who would naturally place the rooms so as to catch every breath of air, and the first purchases of property were here, and further one of the deeds, 1845 or 1846, of the lower property is to Suzette Grymes "of Capo di Monte," the name she gave to her hilltop dwelling.

In 1846, John R. Grymes gave Suzette Grymes a power of attorney to rent, sell or mortgage any or all of the property, giving as a reason the fact that a large portion of his time was spent out of the state of New York and that his wife was permanently a resident of said state.

In 1858, William Butler Duncan purchased the place from Madame Grymes and made it his home until 1896, when it was sold to George H. Kendall. The place contained twenty acres.

Members of the Grymes family have failed to respond to requests for information concerning Madame Suzette Grymes and it has been necessary to fall back on such slender facts as have been gleaned from a few long memories and from official records. The pickings are somewhat scant.

Madame Grymes was of Spanish descent, her maiden name being Bosque. She



THE KENDALL-DUNCAN-GRYMES HOUSE. ERECTED 1836-7 BY MADAME SUZETTE GRYMES, WHO CALLED HER PLACE CAPO DI MONTE. FOR A SHORT SPACE THE ENTIRE HILL WAS SO CALLED, THE PRESENT APPELLATION HAVING BEEN ADOPTED MORE RECENTLY.



married William C. C. Claiborne, governor of the territory of Mississippi and after his death married John Randolph Grymes, a lawyer, of New Orleans. Their children were:—

1. Medora, who married Samuel Ward of New York.
2. Edgar.
3. Alfred.
4. Athenaise, who married Louis A. von Hoffman.

A mysterious "Mable" is referred to in the will of Louis A. von Hoffman, but as her name does not appear in the genealogical records of the Grymes family it is not clear who she was.

A codicil of the von Hoffman will disposes of "principal and income of a certain fund to me paid over by Suzette Grymes, now deceased, the mother of my late wife, which said fund was by me received in accordance with the following instructions in writing to me at the time given by the donor thereof". Translation of Madam Grymes's instructions which are given in the will in the original French.

"I have given this day 20 thousand francs to my son-in-law Louis von Hoffman. I made him a present of it until his death and then this sum will go to Mabel but not before, because she will spend it in dresses and hats. He can do with this sum what he wants, increase it or invest it. I beg him to give some little interest to Mabel, as a little present which comes from me."

Madame Grymes is recalled as a heavily built woman, very strong and masculine, and with a peppery temper that would have done honor to the scrappiest of "red-headed Macs," and a vocabulary equally as forcible,

*Wm. B.  
Duncan*

but like many such she was kindly to a degree and very fond of children. Some of the present day gray-heads recall with lively satisfaction her Christmas liberality which appears to have been as free as salvation.

When William Butler Duncan purchased the property the four corner wings were merely one story in height; he transformed one of these into the present tower and added a story to each of the others; it was Mr. Duncan who erected the present stone wall

Mr. Duncan's father was a native of Scotland, but came to this country in his youth and married a Miss Butler of Providence. The son graduated from Brown University in 1860 and five years later became the head of the banking firm of Duncan, Sherman and Company. He had many prominent friends and was visited by King Edward VII, then the Prince of Wales, when the latter was in this country and it is possible that the Prince was entertained in the Grymes Hill home as were many other notables. Among such was the first Lord Rosebery who it was understood was engaged to a daughter of Mr. Duncan; the visitor was taken sick while here and returned home to die. The daughter later married the Honorable Mr. Phipps.

*F. G.  
Strohmeyer*

*Alfred  
Grymes*

*C. Drucklieb*

*L. A. von  
Hoffman*

Opposite, on the other side of our highway, lie the Strohmeyer and Drucklieb properties. The home of Mr. F. G. Strohmeyer, which is two-thirds of the way down the hill, was erected before 1845 by Alfred Grymes, son of Madame Grymes. It passed from his possession into that of the present owner.

The C. Drucklieb house is the former home of Louis A. von Hoffman, a son-in-law



## SERPENTINE ROAD

67

of Madame Grymes. This is one of the most beautifully wooded hillsides imaginable. The present owner is constantly reforesting his domain, as he believes in making two trees grow where one grew before. Originally Mr. Drucklieb only purchased the northern end of his present holdings and the house close on the road, now occupied by Mr. W. H. Pouch, was erected by him for dwelling purposes, but having acquired the larger domain Mr. Drucklieb removed to the von Hoffman-Grymes house which he still occupies.

The decided bend in the road which puts a kink in the Kendall stone wall hereabouts is that particular spot spoken of elsewhere at which Howard avenue and the Serpentine road become one. If I am correctly informed the Serpentine road is not so named because it reminds one of the trail of the serpent, though it might well be, but because it passes over a stratum of rather rare rock known as serpentine; the rock, however, is so named because it often occurs in winding, irregular veins and possibly the road thus received its cue.

There are more exotics dwelling along this way than those who live in houses made with hands. Here, for instance, when spring comes to us, can be found the American Star Thistle which has been naturalized from the dry plains of Missouri and the southwest. Its red buttons add a pleasant touch to the garments in which old Mother Earth clothes herself in these parts.

From the beginning of the Drucklieb property to the Cunard gateway we catch but glimpses of the view through the trees. The sun glistening on the Lower Bay makes a brilliant background for the tall columns

*W. H.  
Pouch*

*Howard Av.  
Ends  
The Serpen-  
tine Road  
Begins*

*Chas. E.  
Seitz*

*Thos.  
Nesmith*

*J. P.  
Nesmith*

*Col. George  
Browne*

upholding the roof of green above us, and these in turn break the expanse into innumerable small pictures where a bit of canvas or the long, black trail of a passing steamer furnishes the motif; or possibly some ponds in the low country shine like bright, particular stars under the touch of the same illuminating hand.

El Paradiso, the property of Chas. E. Seitz, is the next place on the left. This was originally the home of John P. Nesmith while Thomas Nesmith lived just beyond.

Thomas Nesmith made the first purchase in April, 1836; John P. purchased in September, 1840. The Nesmiths continued to purchase property up to 1865, some fifty parcels in all, until they not only owned everything between the Grymes and Cunard-Vanderbilt places and the Richmond road and Clove road and the Turnpike, but also purchased beyond the Turnpike to the shores of Silver lake in the one direction and east of the Richmond road in the other. The description of one piece of property, 1844, which lay along the Richmond road includes "a marked cedar tree near the foot of Brimstone Hill."

The Nesmiths are identified in some of the deeds as of the city of New York, merchant. In a deed dated in 1865 Thomas Nesmith is spoken of as of Derry, N. H.; it is a common family name in those parts and the family may have come from New Hampshire originally.

May 18, 1866, John P. Nesmith sold his home, which he called "Inwood", to Joanna C. Browne, wife of Col. George Browne, she in 1874 to William B. Ogden. In 1881 Anna B. A. Shaw, "widow, of the city of Philadelphia," purchased and placed the



THE SERPENTINE ROAD, LOOKING NORTH FROM THE GATE OF THE OLD JOHN P. NESMITH PLACE. THE BEND IN THE DISTANCE MARKS THE NORTHERN END OF THE SERPENTINE ROAD. AT THAT POINT THE ROAD FORMERLY PLUNGED DOWN HILL TO RICHMOND ROAD AT BROAD STREET, AND HOWARD AVENUE RAN INTO IT AND STOPPED. THE LOWER PART OF THE ROAD WAS LATER ABANDONED AND ROAD AND AVENUE BECAME ONE.



## SERPENTINE ROAD

69

property in trust for her son, Edward H. Shaw of New York; in 1890 Amzi L. Barber became the owner, but sold the same year to George H. Kendall, and he in 1902 to the present owner.

Sheriff Denyse tells the following story, but does not recall to which one of the Nesmiths it applies. Pat Henry, a contractor, undertook to dig a well for one of the Nesmith houses, he agreeing not to ask for his money until he could show water, but after reaching a depth of forty or fifty feet without even getting damp feet he tired of his bargain and selecting a dark night proceeded to cart the desired element from some pond. In the morning the guileless Mr. Nesmith was shown his four feet of water in his well and Pat got his money and retired. In the course of a few days the water likewise retired and left the owner with a perfectly good hole in the ground, and such reflections as would naturally go with the situation.

As stated above Thomas Nesmith purchased in April, 1836. His home which stood south of his brother's place was known as "Cedar Cliff". By or before 1867 this property came into the possession of Eugene Dutilh, a New York banker. In 1889 Louise T., wife of Alexander Barrington, sold to Mrs. Winnifred F., wife of Robert A. Ammon of Tompkinsville, for \$6,500, this included the house and furniture and twelve acres of land.

Christmas eve, 1894, the house burned. The fire caught during the absence of the owner and while Mrs. Ammon was arranging a Christmas tree for the children and was attributed to a lantern in the hands of the gardener.

*Thos.  
Nesmith*

*Eugene  
Dutilh*

*R. A.  
Ammon*

Mr. Ammon's desire for riches exceeded his ability to keep out of trouble and for a considerable period he figured prominently in the New York papers. During the days of his prosperity he purchased considerable property hereabouts until he owned all the property along the south side of the Serpentine road to the King place, which he also purchased in 1901.

No one can be expected to appreciate the full beauty of this region until he sees it on some showery day when those who do not know enough to go out when it rains are snuggled up at home. Then the adventurous one has it all to himself or at least only divides with the small, wild things. It is surprising how careless of the proprieties these are at such a time, for it seems to be with particular gusto that they scamper along wet boughs or through the watery grass. At such a time a little brown bunny is just as apt as not to sit up on the path and wave his paws at one as though he were quite ready to spar it out then and there, or a gray squirrel perched on a nearby branch will wink an eye with a demure solemnity that is quite fetching.

Somehow these incautious doings never seem to happen when the sun shines and it has occurred to me that the lesser denizens of the wood have heard of the old admonition to keep one's powder dry and still labor under the impression that modern shooting irons do not work at such a time. But whatever the reason they go skylarking around the woods like so many small boys when teacher reports sick; and the birds are not one whit more serious-minded.

For a short space now the Serpentine road is a typical winding, woodland road,

showing only such evidences of modern civilization as its macadam bed and bordering telegraph poles furnish. No fence confines the traveler but trees on either hand rise up to call it blessed and those so inclined may take to the woods without let or hindrance.

Here we gaze down the wooded slopes of Pleasant Valley, a name which does not convey much but serves as a handle. This furnishes Hillside avenue a means of reaching the lower regions, and also lends something of variety to the view, for one can not only see through but over the trees and when a morning sun puts a glitter on the far ocean horizon line, a very good excuse is furnished the stroller to stop for a brief rest.

On the right, opposite Hillside avenue, stands the R. A. Ammon dwelling, "Fair Acres". The property was purchased by Rev. Gordon Winslow in 1846 from John P. Nesmith who also granted a right of way over "an intended road" which led "to the road opposite the house of the said John P. Nesmith." This accounts for so much of the Serpentine road. In 1870 the widow of Gordon Winslow sold to Edward King and in 1901 he to Mrs. R. A. Ammon.

The Reverend Gordon Winslow came to Staten Island in 1845, being driven here by bronchial trouble. He purchased about ten acres of land and erected a simple house in which he spent the remainder of his days, except during the Civil War period. He was a graduate of Yale, 1830, where he also studied theology, but later turned to the creed of the Episcopalian. He became rector of St. Paul's and chaplain of the Quarantine, holding the latter position for sev-

*Pleasant  
Valley*

*Rev. Gordon  
Winslow*

enteen years and being highly regarded because of his devotion to the sick during the yellow fever epidemic.

When the Fifth New York, known as the "Duryea Zouaves" went to the front, Gordon Winslow went as the chaplain; from the first his record stands a shining mark, none surpassed him in bravery or devotion to the wounded. Note what the officer in command reported after the battle at Big Bethel: "The noble conduct of Chaplain Winslow and the generous-hearted men who remained to help the wounded deserves the highest praise; and the toilsome task which they accomplished, of dragging the rude vehicles filled with their helpless comrades, over a weary road of nine miles in their exhausted condition, with the prospect of an attack every minute, bespeaks a goodness of heart and a bravery never excelled." James Parton speaking of the same incident says: "The noble Chaplain Winslow, with a few other men, remained behind, and, all exhausted as they were, drew the wounded in wagons nine miles from the scene of the action to the nearest camp."

Some two years later, Major-General Warren, in a report issued in January, 1863, summarizes his deeds as follows:—

"From the first battle of the war at Big Bethel to the last at Fredericksburg, Dr. Winslow has shown an adaptability for his position, and a success in efforts which has won the confidence of all. At an early day he was elected by the Sanitary Commission at Washington for the responsible position of the Sanitary Inspector of the Army. This immense labor he sustained till the commencement of the Peninsular campaign, for which he received the earnest thanks



of the Department at Washington. Since the commencement of the Peninsular campaign he has been my aid and a member of my staff, and has been constantly with me on the field, except when the claims of humanity and mercy called him to attend to the sufferings of his fallen comrades. His efforts in this department I most gratefully acknowledge. For days and nights after the battles of Williamsburg, Hanover Court House, Gaines Mills, Malvern Hill, Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, the doctor has had frequent recourse to his experience to guide him to the best measures of improving hospitals for the wounded, or means of comfort and solace, which at such times of trial cannot be too highly valued."

He is spoken of by those who knew him when he lived on the hill as a pretty good doctor (of medicine), a good nurse, a taxidermist, hunter, fisherman and nature-lover; a genial, agreeable and instructive companion with mind and manners finely cultivated.

Dr. Winslow's elder son, Col. Cleveland Winslow, of the Fifth New York, was badly wounded in the battle of the Wilderness, and while bringing him and other wounded officers and men to Alexandria the doctor lost his life, June 7, 1864, at the mouth of the Potomac. He fell overboard from the transport steamer Mary Ripley, and after swimming for some time, suddenly disappeared as he was about to be rescued. The remains were never found.

The son mentioned above died in the hospital at Alexandria one month after the death of his father. Of him Major-General Warren reported, "I have never known a braver officer."

*Col.  
Cleveland  
Winslow*

*Edward  
King*

Edward King was the well-known New York banker, president of the Union Trust. He owned this property for about thirty-one years.

When Mr. King decided to quit he advertised that the place would be sold at auction and that half of the purchase price would be allowed to stand on mortgage. Much to his chagrin Ammon bought the place in on a bid of \$8,000. Immediately Mr. King, who had a strong dislike for the purchaser, decided that if possible he would avoid holding the mortgage and called in his legal adviser, Mr. DeWitt Stafford, charging him to meet Ammon and, if possible, persuade him to pay the entire amount. They met in the real estate office of Mr. Cornell in Stapleton and Ammon when questioned said he would pay the \$8,000 if Mr. King would deduct the \$100 he had paid for searching the title. This was readily agreed to, whereupon the new owner pulled an immense roll of bills from his pocket and counted out \$7,900 in cash which he turned over. Mr. King was greatly delighted with the result until the lawyer suggested that this was no doubt part of the ill-gotten gains of the Miller Syndicate, when his joy was much abated.

Here again did fire come to mar the perfect peace of the new owner. On November 30, 1901 a barn in which was stored considerable furniture was destroyed by a fire of supposed incendiary origin. Mr. Ammon thought it might have been started by a discharged coachman. A reward was offered by the insurance companies interested, but nothing came of it.

*Gen. Wm.  
G. Ward*

Next stands the former home of General William G. Ward, erected by him in 1865 on

a twenty-acre plot purchased from one of the Nesmith brothers. He called his place "Oneata", a Seminole word brought from the Dry Tortugas by a friend of the family, a Doctor Storrow, and which he translated to mean "Kissed by the dawn". When a young man in college the General used to visit the hill. He and John Anthon were friends and Miss Ward thinks that Doctor Winslow acted as tutor for her father at this time, a double incentive to draw him here. Before building he rented the Winslow house for three or four summers.

A brief biography of General Ward gives an outline of his services as follows: April 19 to August 4, 1861, Lieutenant-Colonel Twelfth Regiment N. Y. S. M. May 31 to October 8, 1862, Colonel of the same regiment. Participated in the defense of Harpers Ferry and was paroled at its surrender, September 25, 1862. Exchanged January 11, 1863. June 17 to July 22, 1863, Colonel of the same regiment, being in Dana's Division and Couche's Corps in the Pennsylvania campaign. He partly invented and partly improved the Ward-Burton breech-loading rifle.

The Bellevue. Sir Edward Cunard, Jr., married a granddaughter of Thomas Addis Emmett; the latter purchased property in 1850 on this end of the hill from John Mell and the same year sold a portion to Sir Edward, who erected the present house. Presumably it was he who adopted the name "Bellevue". Mr. Cunard was American manager of the Cunard line and could readily see from his home the vessels of his line pass in and out.

The next tenants were cousins of the owner, Allen by name, two or three

*Sir Edward  
Cunard*

*Bachelors'  
Club*

*Amzi  
Barber*

*Capt.  
Jacob H.  
Vanderbilt*

bachelor brothers. These gathered other disciples of St. Anthony about them, and the place was for a time known as the "Bachelors' Club". Either at this time or later Sir Oliver Northcut was a tenant. In the course of time the place fell into the hands of Amzi Barber, of asphalt fame, and still remains in the possession of his heirs.

Captain Jacob Hand Vanderbilt, commonly known to all the island as "Captain Jake", was, the histories tell us, born September 2, 1807, in the old house on Bay street, Stapleton, known as the Vanderbilt homestead, which is still standing. By the time he had reached the age of eighteen years he was in command of a steamboat. He died in 1882.

The Captain purchased this property in 1847 and erected the house which burned about 1904 while being used as an annex to the Bellevue.

He was one of the best known men of the island and being free in his hospitality entertained many celebrities including such men as General U. S. Grant and others.

Every one recalls "Captain Jake" as a lover of fast horses and many are the stories told to this end. That part of his property which lay over against the Cunard holdings and bordered on the Serpentine road was known as the "Paddock". It was here that his horses spent their leisure hours, and many a boaster has come to grief in this inclosure when bidden to show his skill on the back of some particularly lively friend of the Captain's. To refuse an invitation to mount was even worse, for then the owner's wrath was even as that fire which never shall be quenched.



VIEW FROM THE SERPENTINE ROAD OVER THE LOWER BAY. ONE OF THE MANY DAZZLING PICTURES WHICH THE MORNING SUN LAVISHES ON THIS REGION.



Pretty much every one on the road took the Captain's dust, even Wall Street did it once and this is how it came about and how the trouble was mended. On the advice of brother Cornelius, Jake made an investment in stocks which netted him a handsome loss, due chiefly to the fact that the stock did not rise to the occasion, and thereafter brotherly love between the two was as difficult to locate as native ore in a salted mine. As a result Jake ceased his Sunday custom of dropping in on big brother for tea and the situation was just the reverse of the quality of mercy as elucidated by Mr. Shakespeare.

Some time thereafter as the Captain stepped on the boat one afternoon for the voyage home, he saw a handsome team of black horses hitched to a light road wagon that made his heart glad and promptly proceeded to investigate by asking the darkey driver where he was going, to which came the brief but enlightening response, "Staten Island." At this our friend sputtered a bit in his usual Sunday-school fashion, but made no headway beyond relieving his feelings by consigning the negro to what the new Baptist version of the Bible calls the "underworld."

Arriving at his home, he found the darky and rig awaiting him at his own door with an olive branch from brother Cornelius which gave him to understand that this was for him and which wound up with the advice, "Don't be a damned fool; come around to the house and have tea." Jake rubbed his hands over the beautiful, glossy coats of the animals and, concluding to let the dead bury the dead, simply remarked, "Well, they cost me \$40,000." But the breech was walled up

*Vale  
Snowden  
Mrs. W. S.  
Nichols*

*Fred'k Law  
Olmstead*

and the brothers again dwelt together in unity.

"Vale Snowden", which corners on the Clove road, is the home of Mrs. William Snowden Nichols. The house was erected by Satterthwaite about 1852-1854 and was purchased by Mr. Nichols in 1864. The architect was James Renwick, mentioned in connection with the Davis place, and the grounds were laid out by Frederick Law Olmstead.

Mrs. Nichols tells me that General Green, one time minister to Russia, and who was associated with Mr. Olmstead in the laying out of Central Park, once said that Mr. Olmstead and Mr. Satterthwaite were friends and that the former gained a large part of his practical knowledge as a landscape architect in the laying out of this place. Originally it was a most unpromising spot, a mass of soapstone (serpentine), and it required the work of eight yoke of oxen almost a year to haul sufficient earth from the top of the hill to make a foundation for the garden.

A well which is situated almost in front of the house and very near the road was, according to local tradition, a regular stopping place for the Philadelphia stages. Mrs. Nichols does not know anything more than that this statement came from Mr. Satterthwait. It is possible that there may have been an inn on the Little Clove road here, but if so there does not appear to be any record concerning it.

Mrs. Nichols recalls that the Richmond County Country Club grew out of an informal riding and driving club which used this place as a rendezvous, as the younger members of her family took a lively interest in its formation and development.



# SERPENTINE ROAD

79

## LAST WORD OF ALL.

One could visit this hill-top a hundred times and never see the view as I have attempted to describe it, nor, in fact, see it twice alike, so many things enter into its make-up,—weather conditions, time of day or night, season of the year; the possible combinations are almost without number.

The visitor might happen on a time when an east wind was driving a thin fog up the hill, one moment revealing the village below, another crowding everything but the earth on which he stood off the map, merely allowing fleeting glimpses of the beyond, and then the hurrying legions of the mist charging upon the sight until all is lost again.

It is like the animated face of beauty, ever changing yet always the same, and never uninteresting. Only a poet could hope to do the subject justice, and he must be no mere juggler of words.



## WHY THERE ARE OMISSIONS!

In the gathering of information for such a purpose as this there is no point that one may reach with the feeling that nothing more is possible. There is always some will-o'-the-wisp in the distance that leads on to further investigation and always the feeling that somewhere is an uncovered treasury of facts.

People come and go rapidly. The work on this book has been progressing some two and one-half to three years and even in that short space three men have died from whom I had secured some information and hoped for more, and two others have become incapacitated.

I have a strong feeling that the southern end of the hill has not been covered as it should be. Rumors have come that some artist who was later renowned used, in his more obscure days, the lodge at the John P. Nesmith gate as a dwelling and studio, but who he was has not been learned. It is said that the head gardener on the Cunard place was an interesting character that was worth a book in himself. I do not even know his name. And so there is much that even such a willing and capacious swallow as mine cannot quite accommodate itself to.

Consequently there comes a time when such work must be cut off short and the dragged ends trimmed into shape as best may be. And this has very recently happened to the History, etc., of Howard avenue and the Serpentine road.

C. G. HINE.

March 17, 1914.

